

# **LIMITS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MODERN COUNTERINSURGENCY**

by  
Natasha Schlenoff

A thesis submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts in Global Security Studies

Baltimore, Maryland  
August 2015

© 2015 Natasha Schlenoff  
All Rights Reserved

## **ABSTRACT**

The overall goal of this thesis is to draw some conclusions about the kinds of strategies and tactics that those engaging in irregular warfare should employ. Given the increasing number of intrastate conflicts and future U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency, it is important for policy makers and strategists to be clear-eyed about viable ways to engage in irregular war. Thus, this paper's analysis of previous counterinsurgency and stability operations, and estimate of the U.S. military's institutional capacity to adapt to irregular warfare could serve as a useful guide for future force planning.

The first and second chapters of this thesis examine divergent strategies in counterinsurgency and stability operations. Chapter One assesses whether indiscriminate force is strategically effective in national counterinsurgency campaigns. The findings of this chapter indicate that while indiscriminate force may be tactically effective in the near-term, indiscriminate force alone does not produce long-term success. Chapter Two assesses conditions for conflict and stability in Iraq, and why, despite similarly low levels of development and proximity to violence, some areas of Iraq are more stable than others. My research found the examined Shi'a and Kurdish communities in Iraq maintained stability as a result of ethnic homogenization and a capable local security force, rather than COIN and international development efforts.

Chapter Three examines U.S. strategic culture and the U.S. military's ability to adapt to irregular warfare during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). U.S. strategic culture can generally be defined as the historical tendency to focus on high intensity combat operations and conventional capabilities. I analyzed the capacity to adapt on the

operational learning level and the institutional level. I concluded that although there is evidence that the U.S. military was adapting to irregular warfare, real institutional adaptation to counterinsurgency was limited by deep-rooted norms characteristic of the American way of war.

The purpose of this study is not to argue against the value of conventional military excellence. Tactical successes are important, but many non-lethal efforts and dynamics should be heavily accounted for when engaging in irregular war. The findings of this study offer insights to various limits, challenges, and opportunities for modern counterinsurgency.

Thesis Advisors:

Dr. Sarah Clarke

Dr. Jacob Straus

Dr. Leila Austin

Reviewers:

Dr. David Ucko

Stephen Grenier

## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: Counterproductive Counterinsurgency: Reconsidering the Prioritization of Military Operations and Use of Indiscriminate Force.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Literature Review.....	10
Theory & Hypothesis.....	14
Methods.....	15
Data/ Case Studies.....	16
Syria VS. The Muslim Brotherhood.....	16
Case Study: Sri Lanka VS. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE).....	19
Case Study: Nigeria VS. Islamic Militants (Yan Tatsine, Boko Haram).....	21
Findings.....	24
Conclusion.....	27
<b>Chapter TWO: Conditions for Stability and Conflict in Iraq.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Introduction.....	29
Literature Review.....	31
Social Dynamics.....	32
Economic Grievances.....	34
Political and Institutional Weakness.....	35
Additional Areas of Consideration.....	36
Unique Ideas.....	37
Theory & Hypothesis.....	39
Methods.....	40
Data/Case Studies:.....	41
Anbar.....	41
Muthanna.....	44
Duhok.....	46
Findings.....	48
Conclusion.....	51
<b>CHAPTER THREE: American Strategic Culture and Counterinsurgency in Iraq.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Introduction.....	55
Literature Review.....	58
Theory & Hypothesis.....	68
Methods.....	69
Data/ Case Study.....	70
The Iraq War (2003- 2011).....	70
Findings.....	76
Conclusion.....	80
<b>FINAL CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Curriculum Vitae.....</b>	<b>90</b>

# INTRODUCTION

The global trend in armed conflict shifted from interstate to intrastate during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, non-state actors are one of the toughest challenges for state, regional, and global security. Despite numerous counterinsurgency campaigns on behalf of both domestic authorities and foreign actors and coalitions, insurgents have remained persistent and resilient in a growing number of intrastate conflicts. This fact brings to light an objective reality: many states are engaging in ineffective counterinsurgency operations. Consequentially, insurgent groups are continuously able to mass mobilize communities in an alarming capacity, while afflicted states remain unable to attain and maintain security and stability within their borders.

The first two chapters of this thesis explore divergent counterinsurgency and stabilization efforts. In my final chapter, I examine traditional U.S. strategic culture, and how the U.S. armed forces adapted to irregular warfare during Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the final conclusion portion of this thesis, I posit limits, challenges, and opportunities for future U.S. force planning to “win” irregular wars.

In order to understand the analyses in this paper, it is important to establish definitions for key terms in this paper. It is important to note that there is no universally accepted definitions for many of these key terms, and the differences between terms like indiscriminate force, indiscriminate violence, and terrorism; civil war, insurgency, irregular warfare, asymmetric conflict, and armed non-state rebellion; counterinsurgency and stability operations; can be more obscure than clear. Thus, as military strategist

David Ucko points out, it is more useful to group these terms not by what they are called but by the characteristics they share.<sup>1</sup>

Scholar Jeremy Weinstein provides a useful definition of “violence” in the context of insurgency:

“Patterns of rebel-civilian interaction that involve coercion. Violent homicides... killings are distinct events that are relatively easy to identify and count. Other forms of abuse include the beating of noncombatants, rape, abduction, forced relocation and labor, looting, and destruction.”<sup>2</sup>

Premeditated violence, used by either insurgent or counterinsurgent, that is perpetrated against non-combatant civilian targets, is “indiscriminate violence” or “indiscriminate force.” For the purpose of this study, “terrorism,” which can be defined as premeditated violence perpetrated against noncombatant civilian targets, is considered a form of indiscriminate violence.

“Insurgency,” as defined by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps is “a protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.”<sup>3</sup> Essentially, insurgency is an armed rebellion against a formally constituted authority. Thus, the terms insurgents, rebels, revolutionaries, secessionists, guerillas, and/or militants are used interchangeably in this paper, as the implied meaning of these terms all share the existential principle of an armed group within a country challenging the established authority within that country. Internal battle among different armed

---

<sup>1</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars. Pg. 9

<sup>2</sup> Weinstein, J. (2007). Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence. Pg. 199-200

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps, (2006). Counterinsurgency, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5.

groups for power within a country is the embodiment of “civil war.” It should be made clear that for all intents and purposes of this research, insurgency *is* civil war. Debate over an absolute threshold to differentiate between the terms “civil war” and “insurgency” has no objective value for this work.

Following the U.S. Army and Marine Corps definition for insurgency, I define counterinsurgency to be military efforts to strengthen the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority to decrease insurgent control. Counterinsurgency captures a wide range of situations, from large scale military operations against armed rebels, to other non-lethal operations that “strengthen the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority.”

The wide variety in types of efforts captured by “counterinsurgency” is what distinguishes counterinsurgency as irregular warfare versus conventional combat campaigns. With this in mind, the nature of the mission of stability operations and counterinsurgency are extremely similar. David Ucko, points out that although counterinsurgency and stability operations are not entirely interchangeable, it is useful to view the two together, as they both “comprise of simultaneous military, political, and economic efforts to help a government stabilize and consolidate order in its own territory.”<sup>4</sup>

Finally, I should clarify what exactly I mean by “winning” in counterinsurgency warfare. I do not mean total elimination of insurgents, as this would be nearly if not completely impossible. Given that the goal of insurgency is to weaken the control and legitimacy of the established regime and eventually displace it from power, the notion of

---

<sup>4</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*.

“winning” counterinsurgency can be thought of in near-term and long-term phases. The first, near-term phase is winning the battle. Essentially this means that the incumbent regime remains in power. The second, long-term phase is winning the war. This means the dissolution or surrender of the insurgency as a group forcefully challenging the incumbent authority. Essentially, this is the process of convincing insurgents, by one way or another, that the fight is no longer worth fighting.

It is critical to consider the nature of conflict when developing strategy for different types of warfare. In his book *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice*, French military officer David Galula outlines an important distinction between the nature of conflict concerning “conventional” warfare and “revolutionary” warfare. Although strategy in both types of war can rely heavily on the use of force to achieve objectives, revolutionary warfare differs from conventional warfare in that the nature of the objective is to gain [or keep] the support of the population in order to attain [or sustain] control of a state. <sup>5</sup> To paraphrase Clausewitz, “Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means.” <sup>6</sup> Insurgencies can take root long before the insurgent resorts to use of force. Galula explains that in countries that allow for political opposition, discontented groups have the opportunity to peacefully blossom via social and legal avenues, without resorting to violence. <sup>7</sup> Thus, logically, as long as discontented groups do not openly intend to engage in violent acts, counterinsurgents have no valid reason deploy the use of force. Counterinsurgency exists solely as a reaction to an insurgency; it is the counterinsurgent that bears the arduous burden of crafting a balanced, reactionary

---

<sup>5</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 5

<sup>6</sup> Clausewitz

<sup>7</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice..* Pg. 3



strategy which Italian academic Lorenzo Zambernardi describes as protecting one's forces, while physically crippling the insurgent, and avoiding civilian casualties.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the nature of revolutionary war, Galula highlights the significant role of politics in counterinsurgency. Perhaps the aforementioned Clausewitz quote requires a stipulation- Insurgents will pursue their policies inside a country by any means, *as long as the means by which they pursue their policies do not blatantly cost the insurgents internal, political support*. This same logic applies to counterinsurgent operations. Galula explains that the entity at risk is the country's political regime, and to defend it is a political concern. Although the defense likely requires military action, all operations are carried out with the political goal in mind.<sup>9</sup>

If it is the case that the insurgent does not have the opportunity to peacefully rebel through political avenues, the next logical step is armed struggle [insurgency].<sup>10</sup> Rationally, the counterinsurgent has an armed response. Galula mentions that there is an upper limit to the opportunity cost regarding use of force for both counterinsurgents and insurgents. He writes:

“When an insurgent increases his guerilla activity.... he does not force the counterinsurgent to multiply his expenditures by the same factor. Sooner or later, a saturation point is reached, a point where the law of diminishing returns operates for both sides.”<sup>11</sup>

It is important to take this dynamic into account when examining the impacts of using indiscriminate force as a tactic. The utility of indiscriminate force differs between the insurgent and counterinsurgent; Galula writes “Insurgency warfare is specifically designed to allow the camp afflicted with congenital weakness to acquire strength

---

<sup>8</sup> Zambernardi, L. (2010). Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma.

<sup>9</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice.. Pg. 63

<sup>10</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice. Pg. 32

<sup>11</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice.. Pg. 7

progressively while fighting... the counterinsurgent is endowed congenital strength, but he cannot use the enemy's tactics.”<sup>12</sup> This thesis supports Galula's point that the use of force provides more strategic gains for the insurgent than the counterinsurgent, and that the use of force reaches a point where it is not useful.

The first chapter in this thesis builds on this theory, and examines the effects of prioritizing military lines of effort and use of indiscriminate force in national counterinsurgency operations. To test the real effects of prioritizing military action and indiscriminate force I look at three cases: Syria vs. The Muslim Brotherhood, Sri Lanka vs The Tamil Tigers, and Nigeria vs. Islamic militants (from Yan Tatsine to Boko Haram). While there are certainly differences among these insurgencies, all three cases have three things in common; first, all cases are examples of nationally-led counterinsurgency campaigns; second, the governments fighting these insurgencies all prioritized military lines of effort and used indiscriminate force; third, initial mobilizations of these groups were *not* violent in nature.

Careful examination of these cases showed a clear correlation between intensified insurgent violence and heavy handed counterinsurgency tactics. When these tactics were used, violence intensified and fell into a cyclical pattern, thus prolonging the insurgency. Finally, even in cases that were initially thought to be successful after using these tactics, for example Syria's fight against the Muslim Brotherhood, there was a lack of long term success.

Reflecting on the lessons learned from the first chapter, the second chapter attempts to find conditions for conflict and stability in Iraq. Assuming that indiscriminate violence is not a viable strategy, I look at other potential explanations for stability and

---

<sup>12</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice. Pg. 51

possible successes in counterinsurgency and humanitarian efforts in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Drawing on development theory, COIN doctrine, and resilience theory, I evaluate whether the principles from these were enough to explain stemmed violence in certain areas of Iraq. I examine areas in all three of Iraq's major sects, including Anbar, a Sunni region; Muthanna, a Shi'a region; and Duhok, a Kurdish region.

A deeper look into the local dynamics of Iraq during 2003-2011 bring to light an interesting reality. Region that development and COIN theory would normally categorize as "conflict prone" were actually some of the most stable in Iraq. In Iraq, national level counterinsurgency efforts were marginally important, rather, indigenous factors seemed to stem instability. The areas of Muthanna and Duhok remained stable due to ethnic homogenization and the presence of a capable security force, local to the community. In the case of Anbar province, where COIN and development efforts were heavily focused, the security situation was the worst in the country.

The third chapter of this thesis reflects on insight gained from the previous two chapters, and examines how traditional U.S. strategic culture, which has a penchant for high intensity combat, shaped initial American strategy in Iraq. The chapter then examines how the U.S. strategy adapted in an attempt to better address the conflict in Iraq. I examine how the U.S. successfully reoriented military strategy to focus on counterinsurgency and stability operations on an operational and tactical level through the introduction of Field Manual 3-24, but found that real institutional adaptation to counterinsurgency was limited by deep-rooted norms characteristic of the American way of war.

# **CHAPTER ONE: Counterproductive Counterinsurgency: Reconsidering the Prioritization of Military Operations and Use of Indiscriminate Force**

*How does prioritizing military lines of effort and use of indiscriminate force in counterinsurgency operations effect the nature and longevity of the insurgency?*

## **Introduction**

Insurgencies exist in hundreds of different forms, and there are several approaches that scholars have considered to counter them. Much of the counterinsurgency scholarship has focused on foreign-implemented counterinsurgency efforts, with an emphasis on population-centric counterinsurgency strategy championed by David Galula and then General David Petraeus in Iraq. There has been less reflection, however, on state strategies when conducting domestic counterinsurgency campaigns. Nevertheless, existing accounts of domestic counterinsurgency operations have provoked debate about the value of protracted, population-centric, and development focused counterinsurgency efforts. Rival thinkers point to historical ‘successes’ of states that use indiscriminate force in domestic, irregular warfare. There is no silver bullet for insurgency, but probing the real effects of states’ indiscriminate use of force in counterinsurgency campaigns on the nature and longevity of internal conflict could provide current and future counterinsurgents with some valuable lessons. It is possible that states pursuing counterinsurgency campaigns that prioritize indiscriminate use of force paradoxically prolong and exacerbate the armed rebellions they aim to defeat.

There has been limited analysis of the long-term consequences that result from counterinsurgency strategies that prioritize military action and the use of indiscriminate force. Many of those who point to ‘successes’ resulting from these types of strategies do

not consider a plethora of other variables, and/or are short sighted in evaluating long-term achievements. This thesis examines three cases that have dealt with, and/or are currently dealing with lengthy insurgency within their borders. As this study illustrates, counterinsurgent's use of indiscriminate force tends to backfire, boost insurgency resilience, and/or result in a deceiving, temporary culmination of internal conflict. There is an undeniable correlation between the prioritization of indiscriminate force in counterinsurgency campaigns with an escalated level of insurgent violence and prolongation of the rebellion; these tactics essentially serve to alienate the civilian population and increase the legitimacy of insurgents. This study concludes that prioritization of military lines of effort and indiscriminate force to deal with political insurrection is at best ineffective, and at worse counterproductive.

Although this research highlights adverse effects of indiscriminate use of force in counterinsurgency operations, the necessity of military efforts should not be dismissed. Counterinsurgency, after all, is warfare. Rather, the findings of this paper suggest that military operations and *selective* use of force should compliment, rather than take precedence over, addressing the root political, social, and economic grievances that give insurgents a *raison d'être*, population security, capacity building of local security forces, criminal justice procedures, and negotiations.

It is important to clarify that both insurgents and counterinsurgents use violence to wage war, but the purpose of this chapter is to explicitly analyze the effects of the national government's prioritization of military lines of effort and use of indiscriminate force. I acknowledge that in many cases of insurgency, including the three cases I selected, the insurgent groups themselves used indiscriminate force to further their

objectives. The Muslim Brotherhood, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and Boko Haram all committed horrific acts of violence in the name of their insurgency that earned all three groups a place on the list of designated terrorist organizations. Both the insurgent and counterinsurgent in these cases, and many others, used force that is indiscriminate, but scholarship<sup>13</sup> suggests that the utility and effects of indiscriminate force are different between the insurgent and counterinsurgent; this paper analyzes the effects of the counterinsurgent's use of indiscriminate force. The utility and effects of insurgent use of indiscriminate force are outside the scope of this paper, but it is an important topic that deserves further attention.

## **Literature Review**

In his book *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* Stathis Kalyvas points out that if counterinsurgents use violence to impose full jurisdiction over the state and defend the political regime, a minimum amount of military resources and capacity are required. Kalyvas writes, "The effective use of violence as a key instrument for establishing and maintaining control requires a premium- and thus for generating collaboration and deterring defection; in turn, effective violence requires discrimination."<sup>14</sup> Historical accounts of countries experiencing significant insurgencies clearly show that most governments do not have this minimum amount of military resources and capacity required to effectively and selectively use violence. Thus, state's use of violence alone

---

<sup>13</sup> See literature review section

<sup>14</sup> Kalyvas, S., (2006). *The Logic of Violence In Civil War*. Pg. 111

cannot be seen as a viable tool to defending political regimes and exert control over a population.

Galula's cost/benefit analysis is a rational framework that looks at the way in which rational insurgents and counterinsurgents theoretically operate; however, Galula does not address the possibility of counterinsurgents use of force then having a counterproductive effect, by increasing insurgents' use of retributive violence. Galula's saturation point suggests a maximum, absolute threshold for use of violence by both insurgents and counterinsurgents, but evidence from the case studies in this paper suggests that violence is reproductive and cyclical in nature.

Military operations that use "mop up," "search and destroy," and "scorched earth" tactics seek to eliminate insurgents while simultaneously undercutting the insurgency's civilian foundation.<sup>15</sup> Kalyvas expands on the rational use of force in his book, and posits that as long as the population [civilian foundation] has no way to react against violence, "its effect is to increase compliance with authority among those who feel they may be pushed into total passivity and political abdication."<sup>16</sup> Employing this logic, the state should theoretically avoid indiscriminate violence in the name of counterinsurgency operations, as civilian victims of such violence could logically react, for example, by joining the insurgency. Kalyvas emphasizes, "Random violence is much less likely to achieve its aims in the midst of a civil war, where the presence of a rival makes defection possible." Because indiscriminate violence decreases the opportunity cost of collaboration with a rival actor, it is an impractical approach to counterinsurgency.

---

<sup>15</sup> Kalyvas, S., (2006). *The Logic of Violence In Civil War*. Pg. 149

<sup>16</sup> Kalyvas, S., (2006). *The Logic of Violence In Civil War*. Pg. 142

Kalyvas proposes, “Indiscriminate violence is counterproductive in civil war.”<sup>17</sup> Galula’s work concurs with Kalyvas’; Galula rationalizes that the counterinsurgent cannot use terrorism, which is a form of indiscriminate violence, as a tactic. He writes, “It would be too self-defeating, since terrorism is a source of disorder, which is precisely what the counterinsurgent aims to stop.”<sup>18</sup>

Kalyvas and Galula’s guides for justifying the strategic use and disuse of force in counterinsurgency are challenged by proponents like Martin Van Creveld, who advocates that the prioritization large scale military action and indiscriminate force is one of the two ways that counterinsurgency wars can be won. In his book *The Transformation of War*, Van Creveld posits that protraction of the war is actually the key to victory in counterinsurgency.<sup>19</sup> Additionally he uses the case of Hafaz al Assad’s 1982 crushing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria as an exemplary model for counterinsurgency. Van Creveld identifies five key takeaways from the al Assad strategy. These include:

First, there are situations in which cruelty is necessary. Second, once you decide to strike, it is better to kill too many than not enough. If another strike is needed, it reduces the impact of the first strike. Third, act [militarily] as soon as possible. Fourth, strike openly, without apology or excuses about collateral damage. Fifth, do not command the strike yourself, in case it doesn't work for some reason and you need to have a scapegoat.<sup>20</sup>

In a more recent work, Van Creveld elaborates on a second model for successful counterinsurgency strategy, citing British operations in Northern Ireland as a model for success.<sup>21</sup> While Van Creveld’s offering of a second approach for successful

---

<sup>17</sup> Kalyvas, S., (2006). *The Logic of Violence In Civil War*. Pg. 144

<sup>18</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 52

<sup>19</sup> Van Creveld, M. (1991). *The Transformation of War*.

<sup>20</sup> Van Creveld, M. (1991). *The Transformation of War*. Pg. 241-245

<sup>21</sup> Gunaratna, R. (2005). *Combating terrorism*. Ch. 13.



counterinsurgency provides many valuable insights, this paper challenges only his first approach — the scorched earth method that focuses on swift, indiscriminate use of force.

Considering insight gained from current scholarship, it is apparent that recognition of, and dealing with an insurgency in the appropriate manner is extremely important during the embryonic stage. Galula and Kalyvas offer useful insight on the nature of insurgency itself, and why the strategy of conventional warfare is completely inapplicable to counterinsurgency operations. This paper further explores this understanding, and analyzes how counterinsurgents that are essentially “using the enemies’ tactics” affects the nature and longevity of insurgencies.

Additionally, prominent scholarship that supports the prioritization of heavy-handed military action and the use of indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency is outdated. The first part of Van Creveld’s work suggests that the above-mentioned five guidelines for counterinsurgency *à-la-Assad* is a roadmap for victory against insurgents. However, the current situation in Syria, specifically regarding the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency that Hafaz al Assad supposedly crushed, suggests that Van Creveld’s conclusions should be re-examined. This paper fills this gap in analysis, and provides new insights to former assumptions.

Considering the ongoing debate between scholars about population-centric versus enemy-destruction-focused counterinsurgency, it is important to mention that not giving precedence to military operations in counterinsurgency does not mean that the military does not have an extremely important role in counterinsurgency. Many scholars agree that the population gravitates towards political groups that can provide them with security. Thus, it is critical that population security be heavily considered in

counterinsurgency strategy. This premise is outside the bounds of this chapter, but it is a critical topic that should be further explored.

## **Theory & Hypothesis**

There is ample literature in international relations that explores the significance of unaddressed domestic political, social and economic grievances that give insurgents' *raison d'être*. As a result, much of the counterinsurgency doctrine addresses ways to ameliorate popular grievances in order to deprive insurgents of the population's potential sympathy and compliance. Opposing literature disregards the value of addressing domestic grievances, and instead, advocates for the prioritization of military lines of effort and indiscriminate force as a viable counterinsurgency strategy. Supporters of this heavy-handed approach posit that if the state is challenged by a rebellion that is less equipped in terms of weapons and numbers of soldiers, a fire-power focused approach is rational. This view on counterinsurgency erroneously leads state authorities to choose between a strategy of military destruction *or* one that includes political conciliations. In reality, the answer lies somewhere in the middle.

This chapter assesses the real effects of states' use of indiscriminate force in counterinsurgency campaigns on the nature and longevity of internal conflict.

It is important to note that although the insurgent is not always the initiator of violence, it is the insurgent's acts, whether they are triggered preemptively or in response to the government's acts, that begins "the war." The long-term effects of counterinsurgents' use of indiscriminate force in counterinsurgency has been underexplored. I hypothesize that states pursuing counterinsurgency campaigns that

prioritize military lines of effort and use indiscriminate force paradoxically prolong and exacerbate the armed rebellions they aim to defeat.

The remaining sections of this chapter carefully analyze three cases that advocates of ruthless counterinsurgency tactics frequently cite as success stories. Upon careful scrutiny, there appears to be a plethora of other variables, which significantly contributed to the ‘defeat’ of the insurgencies. Additionally, recent events in Syria have brought to light a misconception in literature’s evaluation of long-term sustainability of Hafaz al Assad approach. I hypothesize that indiscriminate, ruthless counterinsurgency tactics tend to backfire, boost insurgency resilience, and/or result in a deceitful, temporary culmination of internal conflict.

## **Methods**

It is possible that counterinsurgency strategies that prioritize military operations and use indiscriminate force further alienate the civilian population and increase the legitimacy of insurgents, which leads to prolonged rebellion and escalation in violence. In this case, patterns of escalated levels of insurgent violence appear to be cyclical. Due to this lethal cycle, insurgencies in this environment remain fluid and drawn-out.

This paper uses qualitative data from three case studies to determine the effects of prioritizing military action and indiscriminate force on both the nature and longevity of insurgencies. This paper examines patterns in proliferation of violence concerning the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the current Islamic insurgency of Boko Haram in Nigeria, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. These cases were selected using three criteria: First, all cases involved states — formerly or currently — pursuing *domestic* counterinsurgency operations. Counterinsurgency campaigns executed by

foreign nations or coalitions, such as British counterinsurgency in Northern Ireland or the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan are outside the realm of this chapter. Second, incumbent authorities in all cases conducted campaigns that prioritized military operations including indiscriminate force. Third, initial mobilizations of the selected insurgencies were *not* violent in nature.

Should my hypothesis prove correct, there will be three noticeable patterns. First, there will be a clear correlation between intensified insurgent violence and heavy-handed counterinsurgency operations. Second, the violent actions and reactions on behalf of both the insurgent and counterinsurgent will be cyclical, thus prolonging the nature of the insurgency. Third, although the use of indiscriminate force in counterinsurgency operations could provide an immediate tactical win, there will be a lack of long-term success as a result of this strategy.

## **Data/ Case Studies**

### **Syria VS. The Muslim Brotherhood**

The Muslim Brotherhood spread from Egypt to Syria in the 1940s. In its early stages, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood meaningfully and peacefully participated in Syria's political apparatus. Almost two decades after the organization took root in the country, the organization came to clash with the Baath Party, which came to power in Syria in 1963.<sup>22</sup> As a result of the Brotherhood's attempts to undermine the Baath party, Hafaz al Assad — the incumbent president at the time — banned the organization's

---

<sup>22</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

activities in 1964. The following inability of the Brotherhood to participate in the political system via peaceful and legal avenues provoked a violent response, and armed members of the Brotherhood attacked government buildings and offices.<sup>23</sup> During this time, some members of the Brotherhood defected in an effort to take even more violent measures against the regime, and formed an spin-off organization called the Combatant Vanguard. In 1979, the Combatant Vanguard attacked a military school in Aleppo and killed 83 student officers.<sup>24</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood was subsequently outlawed in 1980, and membership in the organization was punishable by death.<sup>25</sup> In an effort to end the conflict and the defeat insurgency, Hafaz al Assad called for the complete obliteration of Hama using chemical weapons, a city in Syria known to be sympathetic to members of the Brotherhood. Estimates of civilian casualties vary, with numbers between 10,000 and 30,000 slaughtered.<sup>26</sup>

After this incident, the Muslim Brotherhood appeared to have largely disappeared from Syria. Because of this, many scholars use Hafaz al Assad's ruthless use of indiscriminate force as a model for counterinsurgency operations. It is important to note that although the Muslim Brotherhood seemed to have ceased activity in Syria,, members of the Syrian Brotherhood simply went underground, and operated out of Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq. <sup>27</sup>

When Bashar al Assad, Hafaz al Assad's son came to power in June 2000, he initially took a more tolerant stance on the Muslim Brotherhood and released hundreds of

---

<sup>23</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

<sup>24</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

<sup>25</sup> Rassas, S. (2014). Syria's Muslim Brotherhood: Past and Present

<sup>26</sup> Khan, A. (2012). On 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hama Massacre, Syrian Troops Lock Down City.

<sup>27</sup> Talhamy, Y. (2012). The Muslim Brotherhood Reborn: The Syrian Uprising.

Brotherhood prisoners.<sup>28</sup> However, Bashar kept the ban on Brotherhood membership in place.<sup>29</sup> In an attempt to gain political influence while operating outside of Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood reached out to other moderate opposition forces, and in 2005 took part in the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change.<sup>30</sup> The Declaration was a peaceful effort, and included Islamist, nationalist, Kurdish, and leftist groups.<sup>31</sup> The Declaration, including the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, renounced violence.<sup>32</sup>

In 2006, the Muslim Brotherhood officially merged with supporters of Abdul Halim Khaddam, the former Vice President of Syria under the Baath regime, who defected from the regime a year earlier, and formed the National Salvation Front.<sup>33</sup> It is important to note, that the entirety of the Brotherhoods political organizing was done in exile. Although the National Salvation Front served as the strongest Syrian opposition group, the Brotherhood and group in general suffered from the alliance with Khaddam; many Syrians were hesitant to support the group due to Khaddam's former position in the Assad regime. Consequently, the Brotherhood estranged itself with the National Salvation Front for two reasons. First, the Brotherhood hoped that by separating itself from the National Salvation Front, regain credibility with the Syrian people. Second, the Brotherhood had actually stopped its anti-regime activities in hopes that this moderate and peaceful approach would win the Brotherhood a seat at the table once more.<sup>34</sup> This

---

<sup>28</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>29</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>30</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>31</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>32</sup> Talhamy, Y. (2012). The Muslim Brotherhood Reborn: The Syrian Uprising.

<sup>33</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>34</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

approach did not work, however, and the Assad regime refused to repeal the law banning the Brotherhood.<sup>35</sup>

In another peaceful effort to rejoin the Syrian political and societal system, the Syrian Brotherhood's newly elected leader, Mohammad Riad al-Shaqfeh, worked with Turkish diplomats further to try and convince the Assad regime to lift the ban on Brotherhood membership.<sup>36</sup> These efforts did not bear fruit.<sup>37</sup>

In the ongoing Syrian civil war, Bashar al Assad has resorted to the same ruthless tactics used by his father to deal with the insurgent groups that are trying to remove him from power. As of August 2015, the incumbent Syrian regime has relied on ruthless tactics, including the use of indiscriminate force in its efforts to quash internal rebellion. As any political opposition to the regime, including the Muslim Brotherhood, is denied access to political and legal avenues, many opposition groups have resorted to arms and alliances with extremist groups. Although the Muslim Brotherhood is not known to be *physically* involved in battle, they now support radical opposition groups in Syria by providing financial resources, and by aiding in radicalization and recruitment processes.<sup>38</sup>

### **Case Study: Sri Lanka VS. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE)**

---

<sup>35</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>36</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>37</sup> Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>38</sup> Talhamy, Y. (2012). The Muslim Brotherhood Reborn: The Syrian Uprising.

The 2009 defeat of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) is widely known as an exemplary case of a successful, domestic counterinsurgency campaign that prioritized military action and use of indiscriminate force.<sup>39</sup> The Tamil rebellion is also one of the longest running rebellions in history; thus, this case is particularly useful for analyzing the effects of prioritizing military lines of effort and indiscriminate force in a domestic counterinsurgency campaign.

The Tamil insurgency originated from a secessionist nationalist campaign in 1976. After Sri Lanka's independence from Britain, the Tamil minority was politically, socially, and economically excluded from Sri Lankan society, and denied access to political and legal avenues to tackle their grievances. Subsequently, the group turned to armed rebellion.<sup>40</sup>

LTTE carried out its first attack on the Sri Lankan army in 1983. The army's counterattack, known as "Black July," is seen by many scholars as a planned massacre of Tamil civilians; this incident became the precedent for ensuing counterinsurgency operations. For the next twenty years, the Tamil Tigers ruthlessly attacked government forces, and in turn, Sri Lanka sustained a strategy of using indiscriminate force in areas populated by Tamils.. During this time, there was a surge in LTTE membership, particularly among Tamil youths. Throughout the next two decades, the incumbent Sri Lankan government focused their counterinsurgency efforts on the battlefield, and cyclical violence occurred between the Sri Lankan army and the Tamil rebels. It is important to note that as a result of some political concessions, a few ceasefires were

---

<sup>39</sup> Moorcraft, P. (2014). *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers : The Rare Victory of Sri Lanka's Long War*.

<sup>40</sup> Hellmann-Rajanayagam, D. (1994). *The Tamil Tigers: Armed Struggle for Identity*.



brokered during the early 2000s; however, none of them survived long enough to have a substantial effect.<sup>41</sup>

The LTTE took a serious internal hit in 2004 when former senior commander Colonel Karuna left the group to form his own faction. The commander departed on the grounds that Northern Tiger leadership was not paying attention to the needs of Eastern Tamils. Karuna had a significant following within the organization, so his departure inevitably resulted a huge loss of support for LTTE on behalf of the Eastern Tamil population.

In another significant incident in 2006, the LTTE cut off the water supply for 15,000 government controlled villages by blocking the gates of the Mavil Oya reservoir.<sup>42</sup> This was arguably a poor strategic move. The incident resulted in extreme anger on behalf of both the Sri Lankan government and many previously indifferent water-deprived villagers, and devolved into a large-scale military offensive led by the newly elected Sri Lankan government of Mahinda Rajapaksa.<sup>43</sup> For the next three years, Sri Lanka's counterinsurgency strategy was focused solely on military efforts and use of indiscriminate force on Tamil rebels and their supporters. By 2009, Sri Lanka claimed military victory over the LTTE.

### **Case Study: Nigeria VS. Islamic Militants (Yan Tatsine, Boko Haram)**

The name and leadership of Islamic insurgents in Nigeria has gone through several phases, but the common denominator among all of them is their desire to overthrow the secular government and to propagate Islamic law. In 1980, vast riots

---

<sup>41</sup> Hellmann-Rajanayagam, D. (1994). *The Tamil Tigers: Armed Struggle for Identity*.

<sup>42</sup> Sri Lanka Forces Attack Reservoir. (2006). BBC News.

<sup>43</sup> Moorcraft, P. (2014). *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers : The Rare Victory of Sri Lanka's Long War*.

between the Islamic fundamentalist sect Yan Tatsine, also known as *Followers of Maitatsine*, and government forces resulted in thousands of casualties and an ensuing military crackdown. Scholars have pointed out that the government crackdown had counterproductive effects, as the harsh crackdown actually resulted in more violence. For the two decades following the repressive crackdown, there was a significant spread of unrest and violence across Northern Nigeria.<sup>44</sup>

Nigeria continues to struggle with radical Islamic insurgents today- many who share roots with the late Yan Tatsine sect. Muhammad Yusuf, who headed a group of young radical Islamists in the 1990s, founded Boko Haram in 2002.<sup>45</sup> The grievances and goals of the present day Islamic militants, for the most part, have remained unchanged since the time of Maitatsine. Political scientist Abimbola Adesoji points out that “Despite the time gap between the Maitatsine riots and the Boko Haram insurrection, the socio-economic conditions that sustained the risings in 1980 are relevant to the Boko Haram situation.”<sup>46</sup> Nigeria is plagued by mass poverty, inequality in educational opportunities, unemployment, and governmental corruption, including the misuse of resources.<sup>47</sup> Also unchanged, are the counterinsurgency tactics employed by the Nigerian security forces.

Despite the organization’s current status as a terrorist organization, Boko Haram was not initially violent. In fact, the group operated rather peacefully during the first

---

<sup>44</sup> Ewi, M. (2014). Why Nigeria Needs a Criminal Tribunal and Not Amnesty for Boko Haram. Institute for Security Studies.

<sup>45</sup> Sergie, M., Johnson, T. (2014). Backgrounder: Boko Haram. The Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>46</sup> Adesoji, A. (2011). Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State. *Africa Today*, 57(4). Pgs. 98-119.

<sup>47</sup> Adesoji, A. The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria. *African Spectrum*, 45(2). Pg. 45, 2, 95-108.

seven years of its existence.<sup>48</sup> There was a noticeable turning point, however, in July 2009, when Nigerian forces deployed indiscriminate force against Boko Haram sympathizers protesting because of a disagreement over a motorbike helmet law. During the clashes, Yusuf was taken into police custody and executed. The death of the organization's spiritual leader prompted many in the Nigerian government to claim victory<sup>49</sup> over the insurgency. However, much like the case of Maitatsine in 1980, "victory" as a result of Nigeria's military efforts alone was short lived.

Boko Haram resurfaced a year later under a different leader with increased ties to various international extremist groups and improved operational and military capacity.<sup>50</sup> In August 2011, Boko Haram committed both its first intentional suicide bombing and its first lethal attack against a foreign target, when a suicide bomber struck a U.N. building in Abuja. Boko Haram attempted to justify the attack by claiming it was retributive.<sup>51</sup> Whether or not Boko Haram's motives during the time of the bombing genuinely were retributive or something else, Boko Haram's message in claiming the attack as such were clear: the state's use of indiscriminate force will be returned with more indiscriminate force on behalf of the insurgents.

Kalyvas posits, "The central aim of indiscriminate violence is to shape civilian behavior indirectly through association."<sup>52</sup> In this case, it is apparent that Nigeria is shaping civilian behavior in the exact opposite way of which it intends. In a Hearing on Countering the Threat Posed by Boko Haram, the Assistant Secretary of State for African

---

<sup>48</sup> Cook, D. (2011). The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Combating Terrorism Centre.

<sup>49</sup> Blanchard, L. (2014). Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions. Congressional Research Service. Pg. 2

<sup>50</sup> Blanchard, L. (2014). Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions. Congressional Research Service. Pg. 2

<sup>51</sup> Sergie, M., Johnson, T. (2014). Backgrounder: Boko Haram. The Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>52</sup> Kalyvas, S., (2006). The Logic of Violence In Civil War. Pg. 150

Affairs, Linda Thomas-Greenfield stated, “Experts speculate that the group’s supporters may be driven by frustration with perceived disparities in the application of laws... and/or the abusive response of security forces in the region.”<sup>53</sup> Kalyvas’ proposition that indiscriminate violence is counterproductive in civil war,”<sup>54</sup> is exemplified by the situation in Nigeria.

## **Findings**

In light of recent events in Syria, it is important to re-evaluate the effectiveness of Hafaz al Assad’s efforts to get rid of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. For many years, it was generally accepted that Assad’s prioritization of military lines of effort and use of indiscriminate force led to the defeat of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and their disappearance from Syria. For this reason, there is some evidence against the first and second part of my hypothesis, as ruthless counterinsurgency tactics and indiscriminate force appeared to yield some initial success. Thus, there was not an imminent opportunity for insurgents and counterinsurgents to engage in acts of [cyclical] violence. However, after a thorough, long term investigation of this case, it is clear that the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was not entirely ‘defeated,’ as the group simply relocated to neighboring countries and/or moved its operations underground.

**After a brief spell of relative tolerance, Bashar al Assad’s turn towards his father’s ruthless approach toward counterinsurgency has proved, in many ways, counterproductive. To this effect, the third portion of my hypothesis is supported. Although there was an initial illusion of effectiveness of Hafaz al Assad’s strategy,**

---

<sup>53</sup> Thomas-Greenfield, L. (2013). Countering the Threat Posed by Boko Haram. Congressional testimony before House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights.

<sup>54</sup> Kalyvas, S., (2006). The Logic of Violence In Civil War. Pg. 144

**counterinsurgency à-la-Assad has not withstood the test of time. The re-emergence of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in the face of the present crisis has rendered previously concrete conclusions about the success of Hafaz al Assad's counterinsurgency strategy obsolete. Given this insight, existing literature should be updated, as former conclusions are not supported.**

Careful analysis of the cases in this study reveals brings to light a previously overlooked reality. In the case of the defeat of the LTTE, which is a prominent case that proponents of destruction-focused counterinsurgency and use of indiscriminate force claim, there is evidence that a number of internal spoilers significantly contributed to the destruction of the organization. Military lines of effort alone did not result in a decisive quashing of the group. In examining earlier stages of the insurgency, there is a clear correlation between heavy-handed military operations and insurgent violence. Further, indiscriminate use of force during Black July led to a cycle of further indiscriminate violence on behalf of both insurgents and counterinsurgents. We can posit that this prolonged the lifetime of the rebellion.

The importance of internal fracturing and other key variables that contributed to the defeat of the Tamil Tigers has been overlooked in analyses claiming 'military defeat.' The departure of Colonel Karuna and subsequent loss of a huge portion of the LTTE support base in Eastern Sri Lanka certainly had a crippling effect on the organization. Poor strategic moves, loss of key leadership, and loss of popular support severely weakened the LTTE from within. It was only after the LTTE was in the process of self-destruction that the Sri Lankan military was able to triumph. To characterize the defeat of the Tamil Tigers as a military feat alone is incomplete.

Violence propagated by religious insurgents in Nigeria is a reoccurring problem. Nigerian leadership has continuously prioritized military lines of effort and indiscriminate use of force in its counterinsurgency strategy to no permanent avail. This fact reveals a failure in the Nigerian state's approach to deal with the Islamic insurgents within its borders. By critically assessing the regime's past and present strategies, counterinsurgents can learn from shortcomings and use insight gained from this analysis to shape more effective counterinsurgency strategy.

This case provides ample evidence that supports the first part of my hypothesis. The subsequent spread of violence across Northern Nigeria after the 1980 crackdown on the Maitatsine Movement is a clear example of heavy-handed counterinsurgency and use of indiscriminate force producing a counterproductive effect. Similarly, the resilience of Boko Haram despite ruthless government offenses and the execution of their leader demonstrates the ineffectiveness of Nigeria's approach to counterinsurgency. Additionally the second part of my hypothesis holds true; the observed cyclical violence between insurgents and counterinsurgents over years of Islamic insurgency in Nigeria has prolonged rebellion and led to a conflict spiral, without resulting in conflict resolution. As Islamic insurgency in Nigeria is an ongoing phenomenon, there has not yet been an opportunity to determine in final terms the long-term consequences of indiscriminate violence in Nigerian counterinsurgency operations; however, the near-term observations do not look promising. Boko Haram's membership continues to proliferate, and the group continues to engage in violent attacks. Since 2010, over 5,000 people have been killed in Boko Haram-related violence, making it one of the deadliest rebel groups in the world.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Blanchard, L. (2014). Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions. Congressional Research Service. Pg. 3

## Conclusion

Napoléon Bonaparte said, “Burn some farms and some big villages in the Morbihan and begin to make some examples... it is only by making war terrible, that the inhabitants themselves will rally against the brigands and will finally feel that their apathy is extremely costly to them.”<sup>56</sup> It appears that states following Bonaparte’s logic when forming counterinsurgency strategy are misguided.

The cases examined in this study each present a unique context for understanding the effect of states’ prioritization of military lines of effort and use of indiscriminate force on the nature and longevity of irregular conflict. There is no panacea for insurgency, but evidence from this study concludes that pursuing counterinsurgency campaigns that prioritize use of indiscriminate force paradoxically prolong and exacerbate the rebellions they aim to defeat. In this regard, the hypotheses of this paper proved correct. It is important to note, that there is a lack of empirical evidence for controlled cases, which lack the existence of violence. For example, we do not — and cannot — precisely know how successful the insurgent groups would have been in the complete absence of counterinsurgent use of indiscriminate force. However, this fact does not detract from the importance of reflection on states’ past and present counterinsurgency campaigns. It is evident that prioritizing military lines of effort and using of indiscriminate force does not prove valuable for states engaging in domestic counterinsurgency campaigns. This strategy is at best ineffective, and at worst counterproductive. Thus, it is critical that

---

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Dupuy 1997:158-9 from Napoléon Bonaparte’s letter to the West’s commanding Army General Guillaume Brune who was preparing to crush the monarchist insurgency.

every military move be weighed with regard to its political effects, and visa versa.”<sup>57</sup>

Considering this insight, effectively defeating an insurgency is not a short-term endeavor, and requires states to exercise a holistic and patient approach to counterinsurgency strategy.

---

<sup>57</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice. Pg. 5



## **Chapter TWO: Conditions for Stability and Conflict in Iraq**

*Why have some vulnerable communities in Iraq remained relatively stable over the past decade, while others have engaged in substantial violence?*

### **Introduction**

Insurgency in the Middle East has proliferated at an alarming rate over the last decade; this engenders an imminent need to reexamine weak points in counterinsurgency strategy and stabilization efforts. The first chapter in this thesis portfolio examined national counterinsurgency campaigns in the cases of Sri Lanka versus the Tamil Tigers, Syria versus the Muslim Brotherhood, and Nigeria versus Boko Haram. The findings of the paper posit that indiscriminate force is not a viable counterinsurgency strategy.

Possible reasons that prioritizing military lines of effort and use of indiscriminate force are not a viable counterinsurgency method is because this method does not address root political, economic, and social grievances that provide insurgencies with reason to exist. Furthermore, indiscriminate violence on behalf of the state often pushes indifferent citizens to seek security from insurgents.

Many scholars agree that counterinsurgency requires a holistic strategy that includes military, political, and economic lines of effort. Still, many national level counterinsurgency campaigns have failed, because local dynamics can shape larger outcomes. This dynamic is exemplified in the history of Iraq. Iraq has a long, cyclical history of oppression and political dissent between its sects. Saddam Hussein's Sunni regime abused Iraq's Shi'a and Kurdish peoples for decades, and the Shi'a-led government headed by Nouri al Malaki after the U.S. occupation continued Iraq's historically toxic political pattern of sectarian favoritism by ostracizing many of Iraq's

Sunnis. Furthermore, there is deep-rooted frustration left over from decades of Iraqi corruption, sanctions, tyranny, colonialism, and foreign invasions that has contributed to the destabilization of Iraq. One could argue that counterinsurgency and stability efforts in Iraq over the last decade have failed; as of August 2015 and current fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the U.S. is making some tactical gains, but insurgents are still acquiring new recruits at a rapid pace;<sup>58</sup> in other words, counterinsurgents are winning battles but the insurgents are winning the war.

However, even amidst widespread regional instability and accompanying violence, some communities in Iraq have achieved stability. For the purpose of this chapter, stability means that much of the population in these areas has resisted engaging in violence and social structures in these communities have remained intact. In some cases, communities have even shifted from passively “tolerating” insurgencies to actively mobilizing to fight against them. The phenomenon of stable communities in a larger environment of conflict leads to an important question— what makes these communities different? Why are these communities able to resist participation in violence, and in some cases, become motivated to become active counterinsurgents, whereas others do not?

Analyzing communities that have shied away from participating in the conflict in Iraq is useful to those in the counterinsurgency/counterterrorism field for a few reasons. First, identifying characteristics of non-participating communities could help policymakers prioritize points to strengthen in vulnerable communities. Second, insights from this research could guide future efforts to build resiliency in conflict-prone areas, which could help prevent future irregular wars and destabilization.

---

<sup>58</sup> Tawfeeq, M., Carter, C. (2014). Officials: ISIS recruiting on the rise in Sunni areas of Iraq. CNN.

This thesis chapter draws on COIN, community-based insurgent mobilization, development, and resilience theory. Taking lessons from existing literature that outlines incentives for individuals and groups to partake in internal rebellion, I assess whether these elements are able to explain resilient, and in some cases ‘flipped,’ communities in Iraq against the backdrop of decades of sectarian violence.

The fields of psychology, ecology, disaster management, and science and engineering all conceptualize resiliency in different ways. For all intents and purposes, this paper focuses on “positive resilience,” which is the “the condition of *relative* stability and even tranquility in areas recently or intermittently beset by violence.”<sup>59</sup> Essentially, resiliency is the capacity of social systems/communities to cope with war and violence, and maintain social order and cohesiveness. For the purpose of this chapter, communities that have exhibited resiliency and a capacity to maintain social order and cohesiveness without becoming engulfed in conflict are considered “stable.”

## **Literature Review**

There are three major trends in existing literature that attempt to explain people’s motivation to participate in rebellion: social dynamics, economic incentives, and political and institutional weakness. Scholarship describing the environmental conditions that make a community amenable to insurgency also fit into these same categories. However, many scholars generally agree that there is rarely a single explanation for participation in insurgency and violence. Thus, many of the theories described in the following section are not necessarily competing, and often overlap. For the purpose of this chapter, the causes, environmental pre-requisites, and individual/community motivations to rebel

---

<sup>59</sup> Davis, D. (2012). Urban resilience in situations of chronic violence. Final report of the urban resilience in chronic violence project. Pg 9.

described in the literature review are assumed to be characteristic of “non-resilient” communities.

## **Social Dynamics**

One school of thought on insurgent mobilization is rooted in the idea that individuals, and/or communities, essentially do a cost benefit analysis of participation in civil war. Simply put, if the entity gains more than it would lose by joining the insurgency, the entity will choose to join the insurgency. In the context of social dynamics, this cost-benefit rationale can be broken down into two paths: the entity will either 1) gain social capital by fitting in with the communal social norm, which can be either supporting an insurgency or fighting it, or 2) be socially sanctioned by supporting or fighting the insurgency, depending on the social norm for each specific case.

Roger Peterson’s book *Resistance and Rebellion* explores how social norms, focal points, and rational calculation combine to drive individuals to participate in rebellion. Based on data from Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance during the 1940s and 1987-1991, Peterson uncovered key elements that are crucial in pushing ordinary people to join in armed rebellions. For example, Peterson found that the formation of resentment as a result of “policies that heighten the perception that one’s group is located in an unjust position on a status hierarchy”<sup>60</sup> can embolden people to “accept risk and act”<sup>61</sup> against those who enforce unjust policies.

Peterson’s point that “formation of resentment” is crucial to popular mobilization and creation of rebellion is shared by David Galula, one of the “fathers” of population

---

<sup>60</sup> Petersen, R. (2001). *Resistance and Rebellion: lessons from Eastern Europe*. Pg. 297.

<sup>61</sup> Petersen, R. (2001). *Resistance and Rebellion: lessons from Eastern Europe*. Pg. 299.

centric counterinsurgency strategy. In his book *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice*, Galula posits that the first, critical pre-requisite to insurgency formation is a *cause*; he writes, “The cause must be such that the counterinsurgent cannot espouse it too or can do so only at the risk of losing his power, which is, after all, what he is fighting for.”<sup>62</sup> The cause is the ultimate psychological justification for individuals or groups to join insurgencies. The cause is an existing problem, which can be social, political, economic, racial, sectarian, or artificial in nature, or an amalgamation of several of these things;<sup>63</sup> the formation of resentment results in a “cause” which can motivate an individual or group of people to participate in violence.

Existing scholarship on resiliency of Iraqi communities to sectarian violence and civil war generally supports the reverse logic that without an environment conducive to insurgency, at least on the micro/community level, areas should generally be peaceful and stable. Dr. Ami Carpenter, a professor of peace studies and conflict resolution, highlighted four elements that guide community resilience in her book *Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad*. The first element Carpenter describes is social capital, which draws on Peterson’s principles of social norms and institutions that determine the quality of a community’s social fabric.<sup>64</sup> The second element is economic development; the third is information and communication resources; and the fourth is community competence.

Peterson’s research also pays attention to focal and reward mechanisms and norms. Essentially, justifications for reward and focal mechanisms as drivers for popular

---

<sup>62</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 13.

<sup>63</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Carpenter, A. (2014). *Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad*.

mobilization for insurgency are derived in the idea of cultural nuances, such as receiving honor or socially accepted violence, balancing out the risks involved with joining insurgency.<sup>65</sup> This latter point is also supported by social scientist Paul Collier, author of *The Bottom Billion*. In his research, Collier found that developing countries with high degrees of “hopelessness” were more likely to experience civil war.<sup>66</sup>

Stathis Kalyvas also analyzes, on an individual level, the motivations to participate in insurgency. In his book *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, he makes the important point that some individual motivations to join insurgencies have nothing to do with social norms, and are truly unique to the individual. Kalyvas writes, “While political actors ‘use’ civilians to collect information and win the war, it is also the case that civilians ‘use’ political actors to settle their own private conflicts.”<sup>67</sup> This brings to light an important consideration: not all participation in political violence can be explained by political science theory. Although this paper does not delve into individual psychology, scholars do take this into account. Peterson acknowledges that while communal cultural and social motivations are important areas of consideration, sometimes individuals have unique, inestimable motivations to rebel.

## **Economic Grievances**

Another theoretical trend that attempts to explain why men rebel is based on economic discontent. There is ample literature that theorizes a negative correlation between higher levels economic development and occurrence of insurgency. The findings from Amy Carpenter’s research in sectarian neighborhoods in Baghdad supports this

---

<sup>65</sup> Petersen, R. (2001). *Resistance and Rebellion: lessons from Eastern Europe*. Pg. 299

<sup>66</sup> Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion : why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*.

<sup>67</sup> Kalyvas, S., (2006). *The Logic of Violence In Civil War*. Pg. 14

correlation. This theory is also supported by Collier's research, in which he created a statistical analysis of factors indicating the likelihood of a civil war; in addition to poor governance, Collier found that poor economic conditions, lack of social and educational programs are linked to an increased likelihood of civil war.<sup>68</sup> Mancur Olson's analysis also considers economic incentives, and narrows incentives down to the individual. Olson posits that participation in insurgency can come down to the availability of personal benefit for participation.<sup>69</sup> Olson's work determines that if it is fiscally beneficial for the person to participate, he or she will do so. Olson's research fits within the cost-benefit framework described in the previous sections of this paper.

### **Political and Institutional Weakness**

The third category to explain why men rebel is rooted in political reasons and institutional weaknesses. Scholar Karl Deutsch, author of *Social Mobilization and Political Development*, writes that social mobilization in the context of political violence is a process in which "major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken down and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior."<sup>70</sup> Deutsch justifies that if the level of social mobilization is highly disproportionate to the performance of the government in its expected role, there will be a higher level of political violence.<sup>71</sup> This compliments concepts championed by Galula, which emphasize the importance of institutional capacity to adequately address the needs and grievances of its citizens, and exhibit control over its population.

---

<sup>68</sup> Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion : why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*.

<sup>69</sup> Olson, M. (1971). *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*.

<sup>70</sup> Deutsch, K. (1961). *Social Mobilization and Political Development*. Pg 3.

<sup>71</sup> Deutsch, K. (1961). *Social Mobilization and Political Development*. Pg 3.

Essentially, a weak government lacks the ability to exercise control over and appease its population. Galula lists “weakness of the counterinsurgent” as a key prerequisite for popular mobilization and successful insurgency.

### **Additional Areas of Consideration**

There has been some attention paid in insurgency literature to the role of other factors such as geography, population size, and external support. Galula considers “geographic conditions” favorable to the insurgent to be a vital prerequisite for successful insurgency. In fact, he condemns an insurgency to failure if geography is not in its favor.<sup>72</sup> Galula considers geographic conditions favorable to the insurgent to be large physical territory and population size, rugged terrain, and forgiving climate. Galula also states, “If the country is an archipelago, the insurgency cannot easily spread.”<sup>73</sup> In these environments, counterinsurgents do not typically have access to reliable transport and communication facilities through which to adequately implement counterinsurgency operations.<sup>74</sup> Amy Carpenter’s research supports Galula’s supposition regarding the role of information and communications resources. During her research in neighborhoods in Baghdad, she found counterinsurgents in underdeveloped areas to be less effective because they do not typically have viable means of communication.

Control of the civilian population also highlighted in Kalyvas’s book. Like Galula, Kalyvas analyzes conditions for likely collaboration with insurgents and stresses the importance of distribution of control. He posits that areas with high levels of disputed control will have higher levels of violence. Drawing from this point, the importance of a

---

<sup>72</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 23

<sup>73</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 23

<sup>74</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 23



capable and legitimate security force that is able to exert control over the population is brought to light.

There has also been ample literature on international support for national violence. External sources can provide financial support, contribute foreign fighters and military assets, and boost morale, back political motivations, and provide information and technology in national insurgencies. Galula posits that external support is a critical element for successful popular mobilization for political violence.<sup>75</sup>

## **Unique Ideas**

There are some findings that contradict Collier, Galula, and Petersen in unique literature like Chung-si Ahn's cross causal analysis: *Social Development and Political Violence*. Through his research, Ahn found no evidence to support the theory that countries where social mobilization outruns the government's capacity to meet welfare, and/or countries where social mobilization outruns political institutionalization leads to higher levels of instability.<sup>76</sup> Ahn also found that wealthier nations are not any more likely to have lower levels of political violence than those in lower levels of development.<sup>77</sup> However, it is widely accepted that a combination of the discussed social dynamics, economic incentives, and political and institutional weakness are key drivers for why men rebel.

Amy Carpenter's research in sectarian neighborhoods in Baghdad shed light on a fourth unique element of resiliency, which is community competence. Community

---

<sup>75</sup> Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Pg. 25

<sup>76</sup> Ahn, C. (1984). *Social development and political violence: a cross-national causal analysis*.

<sup>77</sup> Ahn, C. (1984). *Social development and political violence: a cross-national causal analysis*.

competence is “about organized action of people, communities and institutions to prevent, manage, and learn from crisis.”<sup>78</sup> The principles of community competence are social issues in nature, but rather than representing an organic nature of resilience during conflict, competent communities demonstrate the capacity to apply lessons learned either from previous conflict resolution or through third sources.

Existing literature helps us understand social, political, and economic catalysts for instability. Galula, Peterson, Carpenter, and Collier all touch on similar key political, social, and economic markers that provide incentives and motivation for communities to partake in political violence—by acknowledging the presence of these elements in ‘non-resilient’ communities, reverse logic tells us that most, if not all, of these elements will *not* be present in communities that are stable. In other words, there will *not* be a significant social, political, economic causes from which rebels can rally support; the government *will* have the capacity to function effectively enough to appease and control the population; there *will* be favorable geographic and development conditions for the counterinsurgent; there will be little or no external support for rebels; and there will not be norms encouraging participation in violence.

I acknowledge that even with the “right” social, political, and economic environment, fully extinguishing insurgency is an unlikely accomplishment. This chapter is not meant to be an exact blueprint for stability in Iraq, especially given the fluid nature of the country’s conflict. However, by identifying unique characteristics of stable and unstable areas in Iraq, policymakers could improve strategy to make counterinsurgency and stability operations more effective.

---

<sup>78</sup> A. C. Carpenter, (2014). Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad.

## Theory & Hypothesis

Building on the literature described above, this paper aims to offer additional insight as to why Shi'a and Kurdish communities, which have been historically politically alienated and have poor development standards of living, are more stable today than Iraq's Sunni regions. During insurgency and civil war, it is the objective of both the state and the insurgent to win control over the civilian population and get more bodies on their side by winning the hearts and minds of the citizens, forcing communities into passive or active agreement, or a combination of both tactics. In Iraq, however, the incumbent Shi'a central government has little social, political, and economic influence over many of Iraq's Sunni and Kurdish areas. Similarly, previous Sunni regimes had little influence on Iraq's Shia and Kurdish regions. So what then, on a local level has distinguished traditionally vulnerable communities that have shied away from participation in violence, from traditionally vulnerable communities whose social fabrics *have* torn under sectarian pressure and surrounding violence in Iraq? Have humanitarian and development causes stemmed violence and instability?

I hypothesize that in operating environments like Iraq, national-level politics and economic dis/incentives to participate in violence are marginally important. Rather, the combination of two interconnected features has stemmed violence in traditionally vulnerable communities. First, insulated communities with a relatively homogenous population and culture allows for a strong social fabric not easily broken under pressure. Homogenous identity has, in essence, created a bubble around Kurdish and Shi'a communities to the point that they have coped with the surrounding war and violence well enough to maintain social cohesiveness and prevent the breakdown of social order.

Second, the presence of a local security force with a demonstrated capacity to protect, or at the very least provide citizens with a sense of security within their bubbles, lessens the appeal for extremists wishing to penetrate those communities. And, in the cases that insurgents do go try to appeal to these homogenous communities, citizens' confidence in their local security forces will make them far less likely to seek security from alternative sources. Furthermore, insurgents attempting to infiltrate homogenous societies in which they do not organically identify with will be unlikely to be able to gain a popular support base among the civilian population.

## **Methods**

In this paper, I use qualitative analysis to compare three provinces from Iraq's major partitions, which have all been politically alienated at some point over the last 20 years. First, I analyze a Sunni dominated area; central and western Iraq have been home to a large amount of the violence plaguing Iraq over the last decade. Subsequently, I analyze two Shi'a and Kurdish provinces, which have remained relatively stable over the last decade despite close proximity to violence, and have demonstrated the capacity to prevent conflict escalation to the point where it would break down social order.

The first province I look at is Anbar, which has one of the most turbulent histories in Iraq over the last decade. The predominately Sunni province was the backbone of the Baathist regime, and had the strongest opposition to the U.S. invasion in the early 2000s. However, despite sharing the same faith as Sunni insurgents, many in Anbar rose to defend a Shia-led Iraq during the "Anbar Awakening." The same tribes in Anbar are currently undertaking a similar strategy against ISIL as of Spring 2015.

The second province I examine is Muthanna. Although it is also close to areas of extreme violence, this primarily Shia town in southern Iraq has remained relatively stable against the backdrop of decades of violence in Iraq.

Third, I analyze at the Kurdish region of Duhok, which has managed to maintain social cohesiveness even after decades of political alienation, enduring serious human rights abuses, and bordering Mosul, one of the most contested areas in Iraq.

### **Data/Case Studies:**

#### **Anbar**

Anbar is Iraq's largest province, and is located west of Baghdad, bordering Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Over a million people live in the province, mostly clustered around the Western Euphrates River Valley. Anbar is almost completely inhabited by Sunni Muslims, and was historically the backbone for Saddam Hussein's regime, as the province had close ties to the Baathist regime; many benefitted from Saddam's corrupt policies favoring Sunnis.

During the early 2000s and the beginning of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Anbar served as an al Qaeda stronghold, and provided thousands of foreign fighters access to Iraq through the Western Euphrates river. The area largely opposed U.S. intervention — Anbar and its neighboring provinces were the sites of the U.S. – Iraq War's bloodiest battles. By 2006, Marine Corps assessments of the Anbar province were extremely pessimistic.<sup>79</sup> Many scholars note that between 2006 and 2008, a period known as the "Surge"—when the United States sent hundreds of thousands of additional troops into

---

<sup>79</sup> Linzer, D., Ricks, T. (2006). Marines' Outlook in Iraq: Anbar Picture Grows Clearer, and Bleaker.

Iraq — violence in Anbar plummeted. Some believe that this was largely because of the influx of American troops provided a stabilizing effect. More importantly, however, the U.S. began to pursue a strategy of tribal engagement in Anbar. The engagement strategy allowed many former Sunni insurgents, often called the Sons of Iraq, to “flip” and form an alliance with the U.S. coalition to fight extremists.

Although the surge and tribal engagement did have measurable successes, there is significant evidence that decreasing participation in violent extremism in Anbar predates the U.S. surge and that some Anbar tribes, especially the prominent Albu Mahal tribe, had become increasingly wary of al Qaeda’s violence and desired to drive the extremists out of their territory for years. Further, some Iraq scholars believe that the alliance of the Salmani tribe with al Qaeda was the final driver for rival tribes to form a counter-alliance with American forces.<sup>80</sup> For these reason, clans led by Abd al-Sattar al-Rishaw (Abu Risha), who had actually started mobilizing against al Qaeda before the surge in 2004, seized the opportunity for American partnership at the time based on mutual interests.<sup>81</sup> According to the landmark 2006 study *Iraq Tribal Study—al- Anbar Governate: The Albu Fahd Tribe, The Albu Mahal Tribe, and the Albu Issa Tribe*, these tribes “reject the fundamental al-Qaeda and Islamic State practice of declaring huge swaths of Sunnis as not real Muslims and therefore acceptable to kill.”<sup>82</sup>

It is important to note that even though the Sons of Iraq partnered with the U.S. to fight al Qaeda, the group was, and still is, largely detached from the Shi’a central government in Baghdad. Anbar’s politics and society remain based on tribal customs and values, and local councils are largely in control of basic services. Unlike the Shi’a areas

---

<sup>80</sup> Western Iraq. The Institute for the Study of War

<sup>81</sup> Benraad, M. (2011). Iraq’s Tribal “Sahwa”: Its Rise and Fall. Middle East Policy Council, XVIII(1).

<sup>82</sup> Todd, L. (2006). Iraqi Tribal Study: Al-Anbar Governorate. Global Resources Group & Global Risk.

and the Badr brigades, which were mainly integrated into the Iraqi Security Forces in 2004, Anbar's Sunni local security forces are not part of the larger security apparatus in Iraq.<sup>83</sup> In fact, not much of Anbar's leadership or population was integrated into the national Iraqi system. Nour al Maliki's government, like his predecessor, continued with the pattern of alienating Iraq's citizens who were not aligned with his political party or a member of his sect. Any gains made in an effort to unify and stabilize Iraq during 2003 - 2014 were largely undone by the combination of Maliki's political failures and detrimental spillover from the Syrian war.

According to the latest data from 2011, about 12.5 percent of the population in Anbar lives below the international poverty line of \$2.5 U.S. dollars per day.<sup>84</sup> Literacy rates are not necessarily low, with about 82 percent of the population being literate.<sup>85</sup> The unemployment rate in Anbar is one of the highest in Iraq; about 18.1 percent of the economically active population is without jobs.<sup>86</sup>

According to Relief Web's Inter-Agency Analysis Unit 2011 "Who Does What Where" report, about 81 to 90 percent of the population has access to improved drinking water sources. However, while access to basic services is widely available, the security situation in Anbar is by far the worst in the country. According to an Iraq Knowledge Survey taken in 2011, only 1.4 percent of households in Anbar perceived their households to be "very secure."<sup>87</sup> In the Iraq Weekly Security Report, produced by the

---

<sup>83</sup> Through, there have been plans to integrate them.

<sup>84</sup> Governorate Profile: Anbar Iraq. (2014). Joint Analysis Unit.

<sup>85</sup> Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) Survey (2011). Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), Joint Analysis Unit (formerly Information and Analysis Unit).

<sup>86</sup> Governorate Profile: Anbar Iraq. (2014). Joint Analysis Unit..

<sup>87</sup> Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) Survey (2011). Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), Joint Analysis Unit (formerly Information and Analysis Unit). Pg. 232.

defense contractor Triple Canopy, there were over 20 reported violent incidents in Anbar between April 14 and 20, 2015, the highest in the country.<sup>88</sup>

## **Muthanna**

Muthanna is a predominantly Shi'a town in southern Iraq that borders Saudi Arabia. Although it is also extremely close to areas of extreme violence, Muthanna has remained relatively stable against a backdrop of decades of economic and political alienation in Iraq. In 2010, the Center for Army Lessons Learned handbook stated that “the province suffered from chronic underdevelopment since the 1980s... and consistently fares poorly according to humanitarian and development indicators.”<sup>89</sup> Literacy rates are low, and only 63- 66 percent of the urban/rural population use an improved drinking water source.<sup>90</sup> According to a study from Joint Analysis Unit (JAU) from 2011, about 29.4 percent of Muthanna's population is below the national poverty line, which is three times the national level.<sup>91</sup> The unemployment rate in Muthanna is high- hovering at 14.5 percent.<sup>92</sup>

The poor development of Muthanna over the past few decades is largely due to the fact that it was ignored and shorted of economic opportunity during Baathist rule in Saddam's Iraq. Additionally, sanctions imposed on Iraq after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait during the First Gulf War during the 1990s likely further contributed to the lack of economic development. During this time, one could argue that the sanctions had little effect on the Baathist regime, as Saddam continued to maintain a lavish lifestyle, and

---

<sup>88</sup> Iraq Weekly Security Report. (2015). Triple Canopy, Secure Success.  
National and Provincial Data for Iraq. (2010). The U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Center for Army Lessons Learned. Appendix B.

<sup>90</sup> Who Does What Where (3W). (June 2011). Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit. Pg. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Who Does What Where (3W). (June 2011). Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit. Pg 7.

<sup>92</sup> Governorate Profile: Muthanna Iraq. (2013). Joint Analysis Unit.



keep those in his circles in Baghdad monetarily satisfied while the rest of the country was left starving in economic ruin; the southern Shi'a and northern Kurdish areas were particularly affected.

In addition to unfortunate economic conditions, Muthanna has historically been politically alienated. While Saddam Hussein and the Sunnis were in power, the Shi'a in southern Iraq were generally left out of the political system. The most popular party in Muthanna is the Shi'a Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, with its militant wing, the Badr Corps, acting as its local security force.<sup>93</sup> Throughout Saddam Hussein's regime, the Shi'a political parties in southern Iraq, including the ISCI, were largely detached from Baghdad. In the 1990s during the Shi'a uprisings in the wake of the Gulf War, Saddam brutally crushed anyone challenging his authority. After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, many of the ISCI and Badr Corps members were incorporated into the newly established Iraqi government and, in 2004, were integrated into the security forces.<sup>94</sup> On July 13, 2006, British, Australian, and Japanese forces fully handed over the security responsibility of Muthanna to the Iraqi forces.<sup>95</sup>

During the peak of violence in Iraq in 2006, Sunni militants blew up the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, a city North of Baghdad. Although this event was not close to Muthanna, many Shiites in southern Iraq mobilized to form an offensive. During this time, it is important to note that the populations of Muthanna did *not* choose to mobilize to participate in the violence.

---

<sup>93</sup> Fact Sheet on Iraq's Major Political Parties and Militia Groups. (2008). Institute for the Study of War.

<sup>94</sup> Fact Sheet on Iraq's Major Political Parties and Militia Groups. (2008). Institute for the Study of War. Pg. 3.

<sup>95</sup> National and Provincial Data for Iraq. (2010). The U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Center for Army Lessons Learned. Appendix B.

According to Relief Web's Inter-Agency Information and Analysis (IAU) "Who Does What Where" report, there were between 0-100 security incidents in Muthanna in 2010.<sup>96</sup> In fact, the province has the lowest number of security incidents in all of Iraq. In 2011, the Iraq Knowledge Network Survey 2011 showed that 67.2 percent of households in Muthanna perceived their households to be 'very secure' (as opposed to very insecure/insecure/neither nor/secure/very insecure).<sup>97</sup> This trend of security has continued over the last few years, even as Iraq as a whole has become more and more unstable as a result of spillover from the Syrian civil war and the rise of ISIL. In a recent Iraq Weekly Security Report produced by the defense contractor Triple Canopy, there were no reported violent incidents in Muthanna between April 14 and 20, 2015.<sup>98</sup>

## **Duhok**

Duhok province is located in northern Iraq on the border of Turkey, and is administered by the Kurdish Regional Government. Duhok also borders Ninewa province and Mosul, some of the most volatile areas in Iraq. This predominantly Kurdish and Assyrian town has endured decades of oppression, repression, and attempted genocide against their sects. Duhok, the rest of the Kurdish regions, have historically been politically alienated; during the early 1990s after the Gulf War, many of Iraq's Kurds and Shi'a participated in rebellions across northern and southern Iraq against Saddam Hussein and his repressive regime. The Baathists and Saddam responded to the uprisings with crushing force, and thousands of Kurds died as a result of the Baathist regime's use of chemical weapons against them.

---

<sup>96</sup> Who Does What Where (3W). (June 2011). Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit. Pg 9.

<sup>97</sup> Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) Survey (2011). Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), Joint Analysis Unit (formerly Information and Analysis Unit). Pg 232.

<sup>98</sup> Iraq Weekly Security Report. (2015). Triple Canopy, Secure Success.

In 1991, an agreement between the Iraqi national government and the Kurds led to the establishment of a semi-autonomous region headed by the Kurdish Regional Government. Even with the agreement, the Iraqi government blocked humanitarian supplies and access to the Kurdish regions for years, including Duhok. After the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Kurds continued to become even more separate from Iraq in everything but name. The Kurdish region, including Duhok, is completely separate from the Iraqi political, economic, and social systems. Duhok enjoys the protection of the local security force, the Kurdish Peshmerga.

Even with its turbulent history and alienation from Iraq, Duhok province has maintained a relatively low level of instability. The 2010 Center for Army Lessons Learned handbook describes the security situation in Duhok as “calm.”<sup>99</sup>

The 2010 Center for Army Lessons Learned handbook tells us that like Muthanna, Duhok does not perform well according to humanitarian and development indicators.<sup>100</sup> Education levels are low, and 6.1 percent of the labor force is unemployed.<sup>101</sup> Unemployment has been amplified over the last ten years, as an extremely high number of refugees displaced by the 2006- 2007 conflicts fled to Duhok; internally displaced persons (IDPs) make up about 21 percent of the province’s population.<sup>102</sup>

Compared with the rest of Iraq, Duhok has a relatively low level of poverty. The latest data from the JAU measures the 4.9 percent of the population living below the

---

<sup>99</sup> National and Provincial Data for Iraq. (2010). The U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Center for Army Lessons Learned. Appendix B.

<sup>100</sup> National and Provincial Data for Iraq. (2010). The U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Center for Army Lessons Learned. Appendix B.

<sup>101</sup> Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) Survey (2011). Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), Joint Analysis Unit (formerly Information and Analysis Unit). Pg 84.

<sup>102</sup> Who Does What Where (3W). (June 2011). Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit. Pg. 1.

international poverty line on less than \$2.5 U.S. dollars per day.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, about 80 - 90 percent of the urban/rural population uses an improved drinking water source.<sup>104</sup>

According to Relief Web's Inter-Agency Information and Analysis (IAU) "Who Does What Where" report, there were between 0-100 security incidents in Duhok in 2010.<sup>105</sup> A survey taken in 2011 reported that 64.2 percent of households in Duhok perceived their households to be "very secure."<sup>106</sup> This trend of low level of security incidents has continued over the last few years, even given the growing instability and proliferation of violence in Iraq generally. In Triple Canopy's Iraq Weekly Security Report, there were between 1 – 4 security incidents in Duhok between April 14 and 20, 2015.<sup>107</sup>

## **Findings**

In Iraq, I hypothesize that the combination of two interconnected features has allowed communities that are considered "vulnerable" by COIN and development standards, to maintain an environment of relative stability. First, insulated communities with a relatively homogenous population and culture allows for a strong social fabric not easily broken under pressure. Homogenous identity has, in essence, created a bubble around Kurdish and Shi'a communities to the point that they have coped with the surrounding war and violence well enough to maintain social cohesiveness and prevent the breakdown of social order.

---

<sup>103</sup> Governorate Profile: Dahuk Iraq. (2013). Joint Analysis Unit.

<sup>104</sup> Who Does What Where (3W). (June 2011). Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit. Pg 7.

<sup>105</sup> Who Does What Where (3W). (June 2011). Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit.. Pg 9.

<sup>106</sup> <sup>106</sup> Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) Survey (2011). Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), Joint Analysis Unit (formerly Information and Analysis Unit). Pg 232.

<sup>107</sup> Iraq Weekly Security Report. (2015). Triple Canopy, Secure Success.

Against the backdrop of decades of violence in Iraq, Muthanna has consistently been a bright spot, with the exception of a few skirmishes. With large numbers of impoverished people, high levels of unemployment, preexisting political alienation issues, and close proximity to violence, Muthanna should be considered a high risk for violence. With a closer look at the Muthanna's history, however, it is evident that its homogeneity has undoubtedly contributed to its stability. Before, during, and after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Muthanna's population continues to be made up of mostly Shi'a Arabs aligned with Iranian social and religious leaders. The region's relative estrangement from Iraq during the Saddam Hussein's regime caused a schism in the provinces nationalist identity. As a result, many of the Shi'a in Muthanna aligned their political and social values with the ISCI group, which is supported by Iran, and shied away from Baghdad.

It is important to note that although Iraqis in ISCI and the Badr Corps are empathetic to Iran, many of the Shi'a in Muthanna and Iraq's southern regions very much identify as Arab Iraqis, not Persians. The caveat, however, is that many of these Shi'a Iraqis do not identify with Sunni Iraqis. It is for this reason that Saddam historically never had much social influence on the southern regions; similarly, Sunni extremists will never be able to build a popular civilian support base in Muthanna and the rest of the Shi'a south.

Similar to the Shi'a in Muthanna, the Kurds in Iraq's northern regions, including Duhok, have been a bright spot over the past decade. Despite complete political alienation and enduring a genocide inflicted by the Baathist regime, Kurds, especially those in Duhok province, have prevented the breakdown of social order. Like Muthanna,

Duhok's political and social alienation from Baghdad during the Saddam Hussein era accentuated an already separate Kurdish identity. Even with the fall of Saddam in 2003 and the establishment of a new government in Iraq, the Kurdish population remains largely separate from Iraq in everything but name. Lack of organic, shared identity is the main reason that the incumbent Sunni violent extremist group, ISIL, will never be able to build a popular support base among civilians in this region.

Reinforcing stability in Muthanna and Duhok is the presence of local security forces with a demonstrated capacity to protect, or at the very least provide citizens with a sense of security within their respective bubbles. In Muthanna, the Badr Corps — ISCI's militant wing — has had a presence in the province since the 1980s. After the establishment of the new Iraqi government after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Badr Corps, once an outlawed militia, was largely integrated into the Iraqi Security Forces. In Duhok, the Peshmerga, who have been around since the 1950s, is the military force for Iraqi Kurdistan. The Peshmerga have earned a robust reputation regarding their ability to provide security to Duhok and other Kurdish provinces, and there is no doubt among Iraq watchers that this has had a stabilizing effect in this region.

Comparing the relatively stable areas of Muthanna and Duhok with Iraq's most contested province, Anbar, a few new points are brought to light; like Muthanna and Duhok, the indigenous population in Anbar is also almost completely homogenous and made up of Iraqi Sunnis. However, over the past decade, there has been a huge increase in violence and extremism throughout the province with a few notable exceptions. One possible explanation for the increase in violence aligns with the logic of the first part of the hypothesis of this paper: a steady influx of international foreign fighters via the

Western Euphrates river brought in violently opposing groups of people to Iraq. During the stabilization of Anbar province and the Anbar Awakening, similar tribes with harmonized interests and connected identities formed alliances against what they considered to be “non-Iraqi.” Like the populations in Muthanna and Duhok, the Sons of Iraq found their strength in the resilience of their community networks and social fabrics. While a significant number tribes in Anbar have mobilized as active counterinsurgents against extremists, it is important to note that unlike Muthanna and Duhok, extremists like the Islamic State *do* share a common, historical identity with many Anbaris. For years, insurgents have embedded themselves in the local community; for example, AQI started tying themselves to Anbari tribal leaders’ families very early on so that they would become part of the social landscape.<sup>108</sup> It is for this reason that many Sunni extremists are able to find refuge and support among the Anbari population.

Additionally, unlike Muthanna and Duhok, there are few formidable security forces, which Anbaris believe could legitimately provide security from extremists and other threats. The Iraqi Security Forces do not have a strong presence in Anbar, and the Sons of Iraq are out numbered and out gunned by their rivals. The absence of a legitimate security force that could counter extremists in Anbar and protect its inhabitants is a prominent driver in Anbar’s instability.

## **Conclusion**

Theories discussed in the literature review of this chapter point out that the lower the level of economic development, the higher the risk of insurgency. Collier’s statistical analysis in his book *The Bottom Billion* found that poor economic conditions, lack of

---

<sup>108</sup> Kilcullen, D. (2007). Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt. Small Wars Journal.

social and educational programs, and poor public health all contribute to instability in areas in which insurgencies thrive.<sup>109</sup> Literature from this chapter also indicates that insurgencies and instability thrive in areas that are largely politically alienated and discontented. With chronic underdevelopment, high illiteracy rates, and political alienation for decades during the Saddam era, Duhok and Muthanna are textbook recipes for disaster.

Yet, as evidenced by the statistics for security incidents in both provinces, these areas currently have the lowest levels of violence in Iraq. This analysis of the historical and current dynamics in Anbar, Muthanna, and Duhok show that national-level politics and economic dis/incentives to participate in violence are marginally important. Rather, in Iraq's hyper-sectarian operating environment, the combination of two interconnected features have been the largest stabilizing factors. First, insulated communities with a relatively homogenous population and culture in Muthanna and Duhok allows for a strong social fabric not easily broken under pressure. Homogenous identity in these two regions has created a bubble around Kurdish and Shi'a communities to the point that they have coped with the surrounding war and violence well enough to maintain social cohesiveness and prevent the breakdown of social order. On the other hand, Anbar has suffered a huge influx of foreign fighters and other factors that have empowered extremists. In this lose-lose situation, the proliferation of Sunni extremism in Anbar has further divided the Anbari population, while building its popular support base among the rest of Anbar's Sunnis and embedding themselves in the local community. Second, Muthanna and Duhok enjoy the presence and protection of a capable security force.

---

<sup>109</sup> Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion : why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*.



Though this study shows some similarities between Iraq's stable regions, there are extraordinary social, political, economic, religious, and military differences between the sects. It has been nearly a century since British administrators drew Iraq's borders, but Iraqis have yet to form a true sense of shared nationhood and identity. Stability and counterinsurgency operations over the last decade show us that foreign interventions can provide some short-term and/or superficial security gains, but the proliferation of extremism and instability brings to light a hard reality. As Colonel Wilson, a British military officer in charge of drawing Iraq's border's said, "What we are up against is anarchy plus fanaticism. There is little to no nationalism."<sup>110</sup>

The regions in Iraq that have enjoyed stability have done so by socially and militarily preserving their sub-national identities. Ultimately, a true unity of Iraq can only be achieved if there is genuine will and efforts of Iraqi Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds to do so. The U.S. and international community can help this potential outcome materialize by empowering Iraqis to have an inclusive government and diverse security apparatus, which should eventually be self-sustaining. As of Spring 2015, that is the objective of the Obama administration. Still, 100 years after the formation of Iraq, there is little indication that the majority of Iraq's Shi'a, Kurds, and Sunnis identify with their fellow Iraqis. The future will hard to predict given the fluidity of the current situation in Iraq, but going forward, it is important to be clear-eyed about the reality on the ground and the limits of foreign intervention and assistance. If the status quo continues, empowering the Iraqis to redraw their own lines in the sand may be the best way forward to achieve stability in Iraq. In his book *Intervention, Ethnic Conflict and State-Building in Iraq: A Paradigm for*

---

<sup>110</sup> Meyer, E., Brysac, S. (2008). *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East*. Pg 153.

the Post-Colonial States, Michael Rear suggests that the right to self determination should be given to populations instead of territories. He writes, if homogeneity is not a legitimate basis for separate state as in the case of the republics of the former Yugoslavia or in Iraq, how can it be a rationale for separate states for the French and German?<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Rear, M. (2008). Intervention, ethnic conflict and state-building in Iraq : a paradigm for the post-colonial state. . Pg. 222

## CHAPTER THREE: American Strategic Culture and Counterinsurgency in Iraq

*How did American historical tendencies shape U.S. strategy in Iraq from 2003-2011?  
How did it adapt?*

### Introduction

General Colin Powell, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recognized in the early 90s that globalization would not only shape international politics and economics, but would also have an impact on the international strategic landscape. With the Cold War coming to an end and the memory of Vietnam still fresh, Powell and his team aimed to modify U.S. force planning to better address future threats. The guidelines that Powell and his team created, coined the ‘Powell Doctrine,’ was created in order to encourage civilian leaders to exercise extreme restraint on using the U.S. military in an open-ended manner without a realistic and actionable military means to an end. The doctrine identified a need for a flexible base force that could participate in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, and had the capability to combat emerging threats that operated in a completely different manner than America’s traditional enemies.

Three decades earlier, Henry Kissinger wrote, “Each generation is permitted only one effort of abstraction; it can attempt only one interpretation and a single experiment, for it is its own subject. This is the challenge of history and its tragedy.”<sup>112</sup> Kissinger’s point suggests that “interpretations and experiments” change with the generations. Yet, American strategic culture has remained relatively constant since the creation of an all-volunteer, conventional force in 1973. U.S. history and prior U.S. engagement in war has shaped an iconic model for the recruitment, training, ethical standards, thinking, and

---

<sup>112</sup> Kissinger, H. (1973). A world restored.

fighting style of the U.S. military; generations after generations training with similar values, structure, and practices has led to a distinct strategic culture and ‘American Way of War.’ The definition of strategic culture is generally described as “the role of cultural influences, influences on how political entities judge the proper time to employ force, ways of using force during a conflict, and ways of determining the best time to terminate conflict.”<sup>113</sup> Essentially, U.S. strategic culture is the American way of war, which has been established based on the historical experiences that have shaped the way the U.S. fights and approaches conflict.

“The same primacy that has yielded conventional deterrence, however, has pushed America’s enemies into greater reliance on irregular warfare responses that expose the limits of conventional primacy.”<sup>114</sup> September 11, 2001 permanently altered the strategic landscape to something radically different than the traditional environment in which the U.S. was accustomed to operating in. Because of this, traditional ground forces have been forced more than ever to adapt in order to navigate uncharted territory to carry out missions outside their traditional scope of work;<sup>115</sup> the Iraq war and ongoing conflict provides a valuable case to examine the U.S. armed forces true ability to do this.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was designed to topple the Saddam Hussein regime, implement democracy, and exit Iraq as quickly as possible in order to leave a “light footprint.” However, the anticipated scenario in Iraq quickly disappeared with the proliferation of insurgency and terrorism, and the violent dissolution of the country into sectarian conflict. Due to lack of initial planning for the post Saddam environment, the

---

<sup>113</sup> Lauterbach, T. (2011) Constructivism, Strategic Culture, and the Iraq War. U.S. Air Force.

<sup>114</sup> Record, J. (2006). The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency.

<sup>115</sup> The Marine Corps and Army Special Forces are a notable exception.

U.S. military was unprepared and ill equipped to engage in the ensuing war. It is because of this that most of the world reflects on the American experience in Iraq as one of the biggest strategic blunders in American history.

Recognizing that the conflict in Iraq could not be solved by traditional military means alone, and required gaining significant support and control of the population, capacity building, and restructuring in order to counter the insurgency and its support base, leadership sought a new strategy. Thus, strategic thinkers and leaders, attempted to shift the U.S. strategy in Iraq to prioritize population security and increase efforts to address root political and social grievances. General David Petraeus sought to operationalize these principles, commonly referred to as ‘COIN’ or Field Manual 3-24 (FM 3-24).

The ideas in FM 3-24 are certainly not ground-breaking. Political Scientist Lorenzo Zambarnardi points out in his essay *Counterinsurgency’s Impossible Trilemma*, that the fundamentals of Petraeus’s strategy are rooted in the philosophies of French strategist David Galula, 20<sup>th</sup> century British officer T.E. Lawrence, Mao Zedong, and a variety of counterrevolutionary strategists.<sup>116</sup> However, operationalizing FM 3-24 and the U.S. armed forces attempt to shift away from the traditional way that they fight way *was* ground-breaking. FM 3-24 has since deeply informed how the U.S. military should fight, and hopefully win, irregular wars like those in Iraq. The manual advises against attempting to impose ideals of normalcy regarding foreign cultural issues, and ensures that the desires of the locals take precedence. Nevertheless, any nation’s ability to operationalize any strategy is dependent on the institutional capacity to do so. This is evident in the case of Iraq. In this chapter, I objectively analyze *how* American strategic

---

<sup>116</sup> Zambarnardi, L. (2010). *Counterinsurgency’s Impossible Trilemma*.

cultural shaped U.S. strategy, in its various phases, in Iraq from 2003-2011. I hypothesize even with the positive shift in strategy, institutional norms, which are part of traditional U.S. strategic culture, subverted the ability of U.S. armed forces to effectively engage in counterinsurgency in Iraq. Thus, the effectiveness of U.S. efforts in Iraq were limited.

## **Literature Review**

There are many scholars who have applied the notion of strategic culture to explain continuity and/or change in national security policies. Thomas Mahnken, a Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve and a scholar on strategy, writes “A nation’s strategic culture flows from its geography and resources, history and experience, and society and political structure. It represents an approach that a given state has found successful in the past.”<sup>117</sup> In his work, Mahnken posits that there are three useful levels of which to consider strategic culture: those of the nation, the military, and the military service.<sup>118</sup> Mahnkens multi-level framework through which to analyze a nation’s strategic culture is adopted in this paper: For the purpose of this chapter, this literature review examines strategic culture on the “military level.” Essentially this means the way a nation wants to fight wars, though practice may not always reflect this. In Mahnken’s words “Although practice does not have to confirm this desire, success in waging wars that run counter to national ways of war may come only after a period of painful adaptation.”<sup>119</sup>

One of the first, pivotal studies examining American strategic culture at the military level is historian Russell Weigley’s work “The American Way of War: A

---

<sup>117</sup> Mahnken, T. (2006) U.S. Strategic Culture. Pg. 3

<sup>118</sup> Mahnken, T. (2006) U.S. Strategic Culture. Pg. 5

<sup>119</sup> Mahnken, T. (2006) U.S. Strategic Culture. Pg. 5

History of the United States Military Strategy and Policy.” In his book, Weigley details historical military engagements, geographical isolation, the complete domination of the Western hemisphere, and how the development of American exceptionalism created an American way of strategic thinking and habitual behaviors that many members of the national security community share.

Colin Gray, a British strategist, builds on Weigley’s foundation, and identifies 13 distinct characteristics of the American way of war. These 13 characteristics are: Apolitical, Astrategic, Ahistorical, Problem-Solving and Optimistic, Culturally Ignorant, Technologically Dependent, Firepower Focused, Large Scale, Aggressive and Offensive, Profoundly Regular, Impatient, Logistically Excellent, and Sensitivity to Casualties.<sup>120</sup> Most, if not all, of the majority of literature describing American strategic culture fits into the following categories.

Apolitical: Americans tend to characterize states of war and peace as separate conditions. This tendency is deeply rooted American history, as the latter half the 20<sup>th</sup> century involved a bipolar strategic environment and traditional military threats. In these conflicts and due to the traditional nature of the threat—Vietnam as a notable exception—civilian policymakers and the U.S. military alike viewed military victory as a means to an end. As Colin Gray points out in his essay, this mindset “neglects the Clausewitzian dictum that war is about, and only about, its political purposes.

---

<sup>120</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 30

Characteristically, though certainly not invariably, U.S. military efforts have not been suitably cashed in the coin of political advantage.”<sup>121</sup>

Astrategic: Strategy is a plan of action that is carried out in order to achieve an objective. The *Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage* clearly differentiates between “national strategy” and “military strategy.”

*National Strategy* is the art and science of developing and using political, economic, and psychological powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war, to secure national objectives.

*Military Strategy* is the art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force, or threat of force.<sup>122</sup>

For now, let us consider military strategy and the definition provided by the Dictionary of U.S. Military Terms for Joint Usage; Gray’s essay asserts that American strategic culture relies largely on the tactical, decisive use of military force as a main strategy to achieve objective in war, regardless if the type of conflict is traditional or asymmetric.<sup>123</sup> Assuming that countering an insurgency requires the military to pursue lines of effort other than the application of force or threat of force, it is important to note that by definition, these lines of effort do not fit under traditional “military strategy.”

---

<sup>121</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 30

<sup>122</sup> Weigley, R. (1977). *The American way of war : a history of United States military strategy and policy.* Pg. xvii

<sup>123</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 31



Ahistorical: A challenge in any geopolitical and/or strategic affair is to take into consideration what history teaches us. Gray points out in his essay that although the U.S. military has an extensive history dealing with irregular warfare, the experiences were never, until FM 3-26, used to apply lessons learned and create a comprehensive doctrine to inform, train, and equip the U.S. Army with the specialized skills necessary for irregular warfare. Because of this, Gray points out the U.S. Army has historically had to improvise in irregular warfare, and sometimes just wage regular war against irregulars.<sup>124</sup>

Problem-Solving and Optimistic: Gray states that American strategic culture follows the “problem-solving faith, the penchant for the engineering fix.”<sup>125</sup> With this view on warfare, American strategy tends to view insurrection itself as a *problem*, or something that is directly fixable itself. While it is true that in an insurgency is a “problem” for the regime it opposes, an insurgency really represents a larger set of *conditions* that have given that insurgency a *raison d’être*.

In his book *America's strategic future : a blueprint for national survival in the new millennium*, H.P. Van Tuyl, also points out a problem-solving attitude regarding war in American strategic culture. He writes, “Americans look for simple answers, clear and straightforward solutions, and interventions with artificial time limits. These attitudes come from geography and history, not ignorance. The U.S. was virtually invulnerable until the advent of planes and missiles with intercontinental capabilities.”<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 32

<sup>125</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 33

<sup>126</sup> Van Tuyl, H. (1998). *America's strategic future: a blueprint for national survival in the new millennium*. .

Culturally Ignorant: Gray writes, “Cultural insensitivity... continues to hamper American strategic performance.”<sup>127</sup> Because the battle space during a counterinsurgency campaign is largely in the minds of the people, whose support both the counterinsurgent and insurgent alike are trying to win, understanding the enemy and target population is truly key. The battles that the U.S. has found itself engaged in over the last decade in the Middle East require dealing with both an enemy and a population that have a completely different mind than that of an American military strategist. Van Tuyll makes a similar observation and brings to light an objective reality: “Nationalist Revolutionaries were classified according to American Cold War perceptions, with little regard for the reasons that caused those revolutionaries to revolt in the first place.”<sup>128</sup>

Technologically Dependent: It is universally accepted that the U.S. possesses the most capable and technologically savvy military in the entire world. American airpower has given the U.S. a unique tactical advantage in warfare, and will continue to do so in the future. However, the utility of airpower and technology in counterinsurgency and irregular warfare is limited. Gray writes, “The experience of several countries demonstrates unambiguously that there is no correlation between technical sophistication and success in the conduct of warfare against irregulars.”<sup>129</sup> Of course, this is not to say that the U.S. should not take advantage of unique American air power. Rather, current

---

<sup>127</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 35

<sup>128</sup> Van Tuyll, H. (1998). *America's strategic future: a blueprint for national survival in the new millennium.*

<sup>129</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 36

scholarship points out that the overuse or overreliance on technology in counterinsurgency can be detrimental to success of the overall campaign.

**Firepower Focused:** Like technology, the U.S. possesses the strongest and most powerful weapons in the world. Because firepower is one of America's best assets, is logical to take advantage of this and heavily utilize firepower when American engages in war; Gray writes:

“It has long been the American way in warfare to send metal in harm's way in place of vulnerable flesh. This admirable expression of the country's machine-mindedness undoubtedly is the single most characteristic feature of American war-making at the sharp end. Needless to say, perhaps, a devotion to firepower, while defensible, indeed necessary, cannot help encouraging the armed forces to rely on it even when other modes of military behavior would be more suitable.”<sup>130</sup>

Gray highlights a key point that the majority of counterinsurgency literature agrees on—in order to fully counter an insurgency it is necessary for the military to pursue other lines of effort, rather than firepower, as there are often more suitable tactics. Especially in the cases of irregular conflict in which firepower is used indiscriminately, it can readily become self-defeating.<sup>131</sup>

**Large Scale:** German military historian Hans Delbrück suggests that there are two kinds of military strategy: “Strategy of annihilation; and the strategy of attrition.”<sup>132</sup> Weigley writes that in American history, a strategy of annihilation is characteristic of the

---

<sup>130</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 37

<sup>131</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 37

<sup>132</sup> Weigley, R. (1977). *The American way of war : a history of United States military strategy and policy.* Pg. xvii

American way of war.<sup>133</sup> The U.S. has historically been successful in fighting big wars, in a big way. America's first experience fighting in this way began with its entry into World War 1; the U.S. was able to fight and destroy opposing armies due to a distinct advantage in terms of sheer size, material wealth, technological advantages, and more.<sup>134</sup> However, size, material wealth, and technological advantages provide reduced benefit when fighting poor, irregular guerillas that have serious other-than-military-arsenal.

Aggressive and Offensive: In the 20th century, because of America geography and culture, the U.S. repeatedly joined wars that were already well underway. Geographical isolation required substantial initiative to move men and material across oceans. Nevertheless, American's role as an international superpower and protector has obliged the U.S. to commit to offensive operations in order to take back the gains made by enemies in Europe and Asia.<sup>135</sup>

Profoundly Regular: Gray points out that American soldiers have been overwhelmingly regular in their view of, approach to, and skill in, warfare. Largely due to U.S. history, the training of the majority of the Armed Forces has focused on combatting symmetrical, regular enemies. The only units, however, have largely focused on irregular warfare are the Special Forces (SOF). Gray writes, "The SOF are America's irregular regulars."<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> Weigley, R. (1977). *The American way of war : a history of United States military strategy and policy*. Pg. xvii

<sup>134</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 39

<sup>135</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 42

<sup>136</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 43

Impatient: Technological advantages, large-scale warfare, aggressiveness, and a problem solving attitude combine to form an ‘impatient’ military and general public. Additionally, swift and decisive military successes in U.S. military history have influenced Americans to approach warfare as “a regrettable occasional evil that has to be concluded as decisively and rapidly as possible.”<sup>137</sup> Historical examples of the use of force against traditional enemies offer a promise of tangible, quick success. Additionally, media reporting hugely influences the American public, Congress, and support for policies that provide visible, tactical successes. However, an irregular war cannot be won by swift military action alone, and as the Army knows, is a protracted ordeal.<sup>138</sup>

Logistically Excellent: Logistics is the process of supply and movement of resources that makes something possible. Due to geographic isolation, Americans have had no choice but to become skilled in logistics, in order to make any involvement in war overseas possible and worth the cost. The American way of war prefers a huge amount of equipment, arms, support, and protection; thus, America tends to have a heavy logistical footprint. This is unlikely to change, and as Gray points out, “It is difficult to envisage serious measures to lighten the logistical footprint, given concerns about reenlistment, political pressures from soldiers’ relatives, and soldier-citizens’ notions of their rights.”<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 45

<sup>138</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 45

<sup>139</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 47

Sensitive to Casualties: The U.S. military is known for a keen emphasis on force protection. This completely logical aversion to casualty can be broken down into three goals. First, like any nation, the U.S. wants as few American lives lost as possible when engaging in war. Second, professional soldiers are expensive to train and expensive to replace. Third, the American public has an aversion to casualties, and the loss of public support for a lethal foreign undertaking will inevitably guide policy. Among other things, American sensitivity to casualties is linked to the ‘impatience’ characteristic, as the U.S. has an aversion to protracted conflict. Additionally, sensitivity to casualties is another reason why technology is so heavily relied upon by the U.S. military; why send an American man or service woman into harms way when you can send a machine? <sup>140</sup>

Other Considerations: Although the majority of literature on American strategic culture outlines the 13 aforementioned categories in some capacity, Max Boot’s alternative interpretation deserves mention. In his book, *Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, Boot argues that the U.S. has actually been involved in more small, asymmetric wars than large traditional conflicts; thus, Boot contends that the American way of war can also involve “inflicting punishment, ensuring protection, achieving pacification, and benefitting from profiteering.” <sup>141</sup> Still, Boot’s interpretation shares some judgments with the Gray, Van Tuyll, and Weigley with regard to American difficulty in turning military gains into strategic, political victories.

---

<sup>140</sup> Gray, C. (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 47

<sup>141</sup> Echevarria, A. *An American War of War or Way of Battle?* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army.

With the U.S.'s historical focus on high intensity conflict, it is unsurprising that the U.S. armed forces have struggled in counterinsurgency and stability operations. Career Army officer and military strategist Andrew Krepinevich points out that COIN and stability operations clash with the fundamental strengths of the U.S. military and strategic culture: The emphasis is on light infantry formations, not heavy divisions; on firepower restraint, not its wide spread application; on the resolution of political and social problems within the nation targeted by insurgents, not closing with and destroying the insurgent's field forces."<sup>142</sup>

The idea of military adaptation is a pressing and evolving issue that the U.S. military institution will continue to confront. Williamson Murray writes, "History suggests that military organizations have been more committed to the ethos of the past than to preparing to meet the future."<sup>143</sup> David Ucko also points out that prior to U.S. military's "learning of counterinsurgency, the institution previously marginalized such operations in favor of high intensity combat operations."<sup>144</sup> Even though General Petraeus did lead a reorientation at the strategic and operational level of U.S. armed forces to engage in counterinsurgency operations, the Department of Defense, as an institution has largely kept the same norms and priorities for the last few decades. To this end, Ucko writes, "the U.S. military remained, even during the heights of the surge in Iraq, an institution oriented predominantly toward major combat operations and unwilling to upset entrenched priorities and spending patterns."<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Krepinevich, A. DoD, Directive 3000.05.

<sup>143</sup> Murray, W. (2011). *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*. Pg. 3

<sup>144</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Pg. 169

<sup>145</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Pg. 141

Murray's findings offer similar conclusions as Ucko. In his research, Murray found that at the operational and tactical levels, American commanders and soldiers seemed able to adapt to scenarios on the ground. However, at higher levels, this was hardly the case. Murray writes:

“While the adaptation of American soldiers and marines to the immediate tactical situations they confronted in immediate aftermath of the war was effective, the performance of their more senior leaders in handling a growing insurgency at the operational and political levels was...inept and at times incoherent.”<sup>146</sup>

Military adaptation remains a challenge that deserves further analysis and fresh ideas.

Tactical, operational, and technological adaptation in war is important, but it is critical for military and political leaders to also determine strategic and political parameters.<sup>147</sup> Old habits and institutional preferences to fight in a high-intensity, conventional style have largely worked in conventional style conflicts; however, as Murray points out, “it is unlikely that America’s opponents will prove so foolish as to challenge the U.S. and its military forces in the arena of conventional military operations.”<sup>148</sup> Thus, it will be critical to think of adaptation from not only the technological and tactical war fighting spheres, but also in terms of from cultural, political, and intellectual spheres.<sup>149</sup>

## **Theory & Hypothesis**

It is clear from existing literature that the American strategic culture has distinct characteristics that shaped military strategy during the conflict in Iraq. This chapter assesses how American historical tendencies guided initial U.S. strategy in Iraq, then

---

<sup>146</sup> Murray, W. (2011). *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*. Pg. 73

<sup>147</sup> Murray, W. (2011). *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*. Pg. 311

<sup>148</sup> Murray, W. (2011). *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*. Pg. 312

<sup>149</sup> Murray, W. (2011). *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*. Pg. 311



assesses the shift in strategy and adaptation of the armed forces to counterinsurgency. Through its various phases, I hypothesize that U.S. strategic cultural norms, or “old think,” limited institutional adaptation of counterinsurgency. Thus, even though one can argue that COIN was successfully implemented at the operational and tactical level, there Department’s stated priorities reflect entrenched biases about the ‘appropriate’ American way of war.

## **Methods**

I chose to study Iraq because the lessons learned about relevant skills and capabilities when engaging in irregular warfare are becoming increasingly important as the U.S. engages in modern wars. It is useful for policymakers and strategists to be aware of how American historical tendencies shaped strategy in Iraq, so that detrimental or beneficial lessons can be learned and applied during future engagement in irregular warfare in the country. For the second part of the analysis, David Ucko provides a useful framework for understanding the U.S. armed forces adaptation to counterinsurgency. Building on his research in his book *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*, I analyze the reorientation of the military to counterinsurgency on two levels: first at the operational learning level; and second, at the institutional level.

In order to analyze these dynamics, I use qualitative data gathered from the analysis of U.S. strategy in Iraq to determine how American strategic culture shaped strategy in the Invasion of Iraq. Specifically, I look for links between the established “American Way of War” detailed in the literature review, in the initial U.S. strategy to

invade Iraq, overthrow the Baathist regime, implement democracy, and swiftly exit the country.

Then, I analyze how the armed forces attempted to reorient strategically in order to better engage in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2010). I hypothesize that during the New Way Forward and attempt to adapt to irregular warfare, the armed forces were able to adapt at the strategic and operational learning level, but not institutionally; the institutional adaptation of the Department of Defense to the counterinsurgency movement was hampered by old think and biases stemming from the traditional American way of war.

If my hypothesis proves correct, there will be clear link between old think, which places emphasis on high intensity, traditional combat operations<sup>150</sup> in the Defense Department's indicated priorities. This has an unfortunate effect on the ability and readiness of U.S. forces to engage in counterinsurgency.

## **Data/ Case Study**

### **The Iraq War (2003- 2011)**

A complete account of the American strategy in Iraq begins with the decision to invade Iraq in the first place, and the factors that led policymakers to this decision. While the Iraq war began in March of 2003, arguments for and against rationale of invading Iraq began years before. The U.S. was already in an extremely sensitive environment in the wake of the September 11 attacks, and Saddam Hussein's alleged connection to the al Qaeda was an alarming concern to many in the U.S.

---

<sup>150</sup> Also known as "The American Way of War"

In a well-documented account of the years before the Iraq War, the U.S. intelligence community, with the exception of the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, estimated that Saddam Hussein had, and was acquiring more, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) for malicious use. Intelligence focused on collection and analysis of the technical aspects of Iraqi air defense systems. The Kerr group, a collection of former Central Intelligence Agency analysts assigned to critically review the intelligence process related to the Iraq War, found that there was ample intelligence and analysis on Iraqi political and cultural implications in war, but policy makers paid little attention to it. U.S. strategists and policymakers alike focused on analysis of technological intelligence in order to assess how Saddam intended to use his WMD. Intelligence suggested that Saddam did, indeed have a large amount of WMD at one point, thus, the intelligence and policy community uses this as an indication that Saddam Hussein was planning on using the WMD, based on his stockpile and potential capability.

Iraq was already enduring sanctions from the UN that at the time, seemed to be failing. There was a false sense in Washington that Saddam Hussein was planning to ally his regime with al Qaeda; the possibility of a rouge regime equipped with weapons of mass destruction aligning with terrorists and politicized intelligence provided President George W. Bush, Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Paul Wolfowitz, and his advisors to build a strong case for war.

In October 2002, Congress authorized a resolution for war in Iraq, and six months later, on March 19, 2003, American and coalition forces invaded. In a televised address to the nation, President Bush announced, “At this hour, American and coalition forces are in

the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger.”<sup>151</sup> Initial U.S. operations in Iraq followed a traditional approach to warfare, and focused on destroying military infrastructure and weapons systems. The goal of President Bush and Rumsfeld was to leave a “light footprint” in Iraq, and in this regard, the strategy was different than previous “total war” approaches to conflict. Accordingly,, initial U.S. war planning only included three lightweight infantry divisions with one backup made up of Marine and Coalition forces.<sup>152</sup> But what began as a more traditional-style conflict to defeat a traditional-style enemy and remove Saddam Hussein from power turned into a decade-long counterinsurgency and stability operations mission.

Shortly after the U.S. invasion, Saddam Hussein went into hiding and U.S. and coalition forces were able to capture Baghdad. On May 1, 2003, just over a month after U.S. forces first entered Iraq, President Bush declared the end of major combat operations.<sup>153</sup> However, what President Bush, his advisors, and the U.S. forces in Iraq were not prepared for was the proliferation of insurgency and powerful guerrilla warfare that swept the country after the military defeat of Iraq’s conventional forces.

The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) was stood up 10 weeks prior to the invasion in order to lead post war planning in Iraq, but the organization had little impact due to an extremely short, impractical timeline. Difficulties increased, and Iraq soon slid into chaos with warring Sunni and Shia insurgent groups destabilizing the post invasion environment. Despite pre-war planning and the Bush administration’s stated intentions that the U.S. intended to leave a light footprint and

---

<sup>151</sup> War in Iraq Begins. (2003). The History Channel.

<sup>152</sup> Ricks, T. E. (2006). Fiasco: the American military adventure in Iraq. Pg. 117

<sup>153</sup> War in Iraq Begins. (2003). The History Channel.

would not engage in nation building, on May 6, 2003, President Bush announced that Paul Bremner would head an interim government in Iraq until the Iraqis could hold democratic elections. The interim government, called the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), then began a process called de-Baathification, to remove former leaders from Saddam's regime from their government posts and block them from obtaining new ones; some were offered a chance to keep their jobs if they cooperated with U.S. forces. In addition to de-Baathification, Bremner also dissolved the Iraqi security forces and police forces.

Accordingly, many of the Iraqi political and military leaders offered to cooperate with the U.S. in hopes of keeping their jobs and retaining the Sunni's share in Iraq's decision-making apparatus. Most of these offers were rejected, however, as U.S. strategists saw former regime officials keeping their ranks as a potential threat to Iraq's transition to a new democratic government. The CPA continued on to alienate most of Iraq's Baathists despite initial promises to make efforts to include them in the political transition; unfortunately many of these disgruntled, freshly unemployed, and powerful Sunnis joined forces with extremists to form a massive insurgency challenging coalition forces. Violence continued to worsen with many of Iraq's Sunnis continuing to side with terrorist organizations, and Iraq's newly elected, Shiite dominated government closely aligning with Iran. Al Qaeda in Iraq's (AQI) bombing of the Samarra mosque, one of the holiest sites in Shia Islam, served as unquestionable proof that insurgent and sectarian violence in Iraq had reached an extreme level.

The gravity of the situation in Iraq eventually led President Bush and his administration to seek a "new way forward." President Bush appointed a bipartisan panel

called the Iraq Study Group to conduct an assessment; the report concluded, “Despite a massive effort, stability in Iraq remains elusive, and the situation is deteriorating... The ability of the U.S. to shape outcomes is diminishing. Time is running out.”<sup>154</sup> It was also clear to U.S. policymakers that there were not enough troops to stabilize Iraq, and that there needed to be a major effort to win over Iraq’s vulnerable Sunni populations so that they would not be pushed towards to join the insurgency. The Iraq Group Study’s report provided recommendations for diplomatic lines of effort that called for cooperation with Iraq’s neighbors for border security, dialogue with all parties of influence in Iraq (except terrorist organizations), and achieving political milestones.<sup>155</sup>

In addition to political lines of effort, the Iraq Study Group recommended several military lines of effort that focused on training, advising, and equipping the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). The report also suggested that high priority be given to “professional language proficiency and cultural training.”<sup>156</sup> In an effort to address these problems, President Bush and General David Petraeus adopted “COIN” as the new counterinsurgency strategy. COIN, outlined in Field Manual 3-24 called for a focus on population security and winning hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. It is worth mentioning that although General Petraeus is often credited with being the only counterinsurgency military leader in Iraq, General George Casey, Petraeus’s predecessor, did attempt to “contain insurgent violence, build up Iraqi Security Forces, rebuild economically, and reach out to the Sunni community through both coercion and cooperation”<sup>157</sup> three years earlier in 2004.

---

<sup>154</sup> Baker, J., Hamilton, L. (2005). The Iraq Study Group Report. U.S. Institute of Peace. Pg 32.

<sup>155</sup> Kagan, K. (2008) The Surge: A Military History. Pg 163-164

<sup>156</sup> Baker, J., Hamilton, L. (2005). The Iraq Study Group Report. U.S. Institute of Peace. Pg. 92

<sup>157</sup> Ricks, T. E. (2006). Fiasco: the American military adventure in Iraq. Pg. 392

COIN and the surge aimed to use the power of the U.S. military to win hearts and minds. Tens of thousands of additional coalition troops were deployed to Iraq in an attempt to ramp up this effort, and “clear and hold” the most violent areas. COIN and the surge also called for increased collaboration and cooperation with the local population. A group of Sunni tribal leaders, nicknamed the Sons of Iraq, reached out to the U.S. forces in an attempt to partner with coalition forces to fight extremism in their province, al Anbar. In return for the tribes working with U.S. and coalition forces, the U.S. provided tribal forces with some arms, training, and monetary compensation.

Counterinsurgency represented a revolutionary shift in traditional U.S. war fighting. Although the counterinsurgency movement within the Department of Defense opened the door to new opportunities and operational learning, it was met with significant institutional resistance. The concept of using the military to achieve both “soft power” and “hard power” objectives that are necessary for counterinsurgency leans away from everything that traditional U.S. strategic culture represents. David Ucko writes:

“It did not help, of course, that the COIN community advanced a cause that was *anathematic* to the “American way of war,” significantly raising the barrier against its entry into the DoD mainstream... Through its culture and history the U.S. military was from the outset averse to these types of operations. This predisposition intensified with the Iraq campaign, which showcased the complexity and apparent intractability of counterinsurgency.”<sup>158</sup>

Operation Fardh al-Qanoon, which began in February 2007, exemplifies the strategic shift away from high intensity combat operations and implementation of counterinsurgency efforts on the ground; General Petraeus spearheaded these efforts. By this time, most units deployed to Iraq were well versed and educated on the

---

<sup>158</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars.

counterinsurgency principles. Ucko writes, “Soldiers participating in the Baghdad Security Plan were instructed to operate extensively on city streets rather than occupy fortified isolated bases; to provide security rather than strike individual targets; and to deploy in mass with an increased risk of U.S. casualties but with a higher likelihood of gaining support of a better-protected population.”<sup>159</sup> Although the implementation of these methods was in some ways problematic, the dramatic shift away from American historical tendencies and old think, represents a capacity for change in strategic culture at the strategic and operational level.

In his book *The Accidental Guerilla*, David Kilcullen praises Petraus’s efforts, writing “We successfully turned Iraq back from the brink of total disaster by applying a strategy of protecting the population, co-opting and winning over the irreconcilables, expanding the center of Iraqi politics, marginalizing the extremes, and eliminating the irreconcilables.”<sup>160</sup> Although the origins of the measured reduction in violence during the period of the Surge continues to be debated, the evidence that there was a clear attempt by the U.S. armed forces to shift the U.S. approach to the conflict in Iraq on a strategic and operational level.

## **Findings**

There is evidence that the initial U.S. war plan for Iraq was significantly shaped by U.S. historical tendencies; the intelligence gathering and dissemination process, decision-making process to invade Iraq, the initial invasion strategy were all significantly

---

<sup>159</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Pg. 171

<sup>160</sup> Kilcullen, D. (2009). *The Accidental Guerrilla*. Pg. 184



shaped by the 13 defining characteristics of the American way of war outlined earlier in this chapter.

The Kerr group report points out that although the intelligence community produced sound analysis on political and cultural projections in Iraq, short-sighted analysis that relied heavily on technical intelligence, selective dissemination, and preconceived anxieties about possible Iraqi intentions failed to provide policymakers with an objective, holistic estimate of the situation in Iraq. Subsequently, U.S. strategists and policymakers focused on the technical aspects of Iraqi air defense systems when forming policy. The Kerr report succinctly summarizes the politicized intelligence and strategic shortcomings regarding the 2003 invasion:

“The national intelligence produced on the technical and cultural/political areas, however remained largely distinct and separate. Little or no attempt was made to examine or explain the impact of each area on the other. Thus, perspective and a comprehensive sense of understanding of the Iraqi target *per se* were lacking.... In an ironic twist, the policy community was receptive to technical intelligence (the weapons program), where the analysis was wrong, but apparently paid little attention to intelligence on cultural and political issues (post Saddam Iraq), where the analysis was right.”<sup>161</sup>

Although the Kerr report was distinctly reviewing the intelligence and policy failures relating the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the report brings to light an important observation regarding the impact of historical tendencies on policy and strategy in Iraq: American policy makers and military commanders overemphasized capabilities and collection via technology and were “culturally ignorant” when projecting the post Saddam strategic landscape.

---

<sup>161</sup> Intelligence and Analysis on Iraq: Issues for the Intelligence Community. (2004). Kerr Group, Central Intelligence Agency. Pg. 2

A focus on capabilities, and subsequent false assumptions about the enemy's behavior based on capabilities, and overlooked domestic dynamics resulted in serious strategic blunders. In line with previous historical tendencies, the Bush administration planned for Iraq to be won in a regular, linear way, in which skeletal forces in Iraq would remove WMD from Iraq, overthrow Saddam, bestow democracy on Iraq, then leave the country in a stable, controlled condition. In a hearing before the House of Representatives, Paul Wolfowitz's statement exposes the administration's ahistorical, optimistic, aggressive and offensive, profoundly regular, and impatient initial plans for Iraq; he stated, "The notion that it will take several hundred thousand U.S. troops to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq are wildly off the mark... it is hard to conceive that it would take more forces to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq than it would take to conduct the war itself."<sup>162</sup> The idea that the U.S. would leave a "light footprint" and had "no interest in nation building" illustrates America's strategic cultural impatience in conflict. As a whole, the initial invasion strategy relied exclusively on achieving the mission by profoundly regular means.

By 2004 it was clear that the former assumptions on which the existing strategy were built were completely wrong. Worse still, the domestic security situation in Iraq was steadily deteriorating. In his book *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*, Murray writes, "Successful innovation has depended on the organizational culture, the vision of senior leaders."<sup>163</sup> In the case of the Iraq war, innovation and the attempt to shift strategy was led by General Petraeus. Although the success of the surge and implementation of Petraeus's COIN efforts are still debated, the doctrine outlined in FM

---

<sup>162</sup> Ricks, T. E. (2006). *Fiasco: the American military adventure in Iraq*. Pg. 98

<sup>163</sup> Murray, W. (2011). *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*. Pg. 5

3-24 and its implementation on the ground in operations like Fardh al-Qanoon certainly indicates a huge shift away from the traditional American way of war. A focus on population security and increased engagement with the local population represent a shift away from U.S. historical tendencies to value force protection over population protection, take an aggressive and offensive approach, and heavily rely on firepower. Additionally, it should be mentioned that FM 3-24 was different than traditional field manuals, which usually focus on tactical operations at the brigade level, in that FM 3-24 provided more of an overview for counterinsurgency strategy; the idea was to shift the strategy starting from the highest levels, and have strategic goals operationalize at the tactical level of Army brigades and Marines on the ground. This did, in fact, happen — the implementation of COIN on the ground evidences the operational learning capacity of the U.S. armed forces.

A shift towards counterinsurgency at the institutional level, however, was lacking. The reasons for the inability of the U.S. military to adapt to irregular warfare at the institutional level appear to be rooted in the continued influence of old think and organizational culture, which Murray suggests is the first key to successful military innovation.<sup>164</sup> David Ucko perfectly captures this phenomenon:

“Although the learning was in many ways impressive its manifestations have often been peripheral to DoD as a whole. As a result, the learning has not to date compelled a genuine acceptance of counterinsurgency as a U.S. military mission or a related reorientation of priorities and culture.”<sup>165</sup>

The lack of adaptation at the institutional level is also evidenced in Pentagon documents and in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The 2006 QDR, like many other

---

<sup>164</sup> Murray, W. (2011). *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change*. Pg. 5

<sup>165</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Pg. 172

DoD policy papers at the time, did little more than recognizing irregular warfare as a topic of concern. These documents were indicative of DoD's preference to prioritize kinetic counterterrorism operations.<sup>166</sup> Colin Gray posits that many U.S. strategists continued to view the situation on the ground in Iraq as a set of *problems*, when it would have been more helpful to view the situation in Iraq as a set of *conditions*. However, the problem-solving spirit that is emblematic of U.S. strategic culture was ill prepared to be continuously challenged by a foe that "could not be brought to battle en masse, or be a problem solved tactically or operationally."<sup>167</sup>

## Conclusion

In his book on America's strategic future, Van Tull wrote, "As the American national security establishment has become more professionalized, however, a tendency has developed to take inherent American strengths as a given and to proceed with strategic planning as an external process, looking outward toward the enemy without looking inward toward the nation's politics and economics."<sup>168</sup> This is certainly evidenced in the case of U.S. engagement in Iraq from 2003-2010. Ultimately, both the initial war strategy and counterinsurgency efforts were limited by deep-rooted, traditions regarding the American way of war.

Gray points out, "It is difficult to argue with a history that appears to validate the military merits of an offensive style."<sup>169</sup> This is true, as the American way of war proved

---

<sup>166</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars. Pg. 172

<sup>167</sup> Gray, C. (2006). Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt? Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 33.

<sup>168</sup> Van Tuyl, H. (1998). America's strategic future: a blueprint for national survival in the new millennium.

<sup>169</sup> Gray, C. (2006). Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt? Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Pg. 42

exceptional in many traditional conflicts in history. However it is important to be clear-eyed about the America's strategic future and growing involvement in counterinsurgency and irregular conflicts. The findings of this paper have shown that a strategy that ignores internal dynamics, sources of conflict, and population security is not a wise way of to engage in irregular war.

All of this is not to say that the U.S. should abandon conventional forces and capabilities. Rather, it would be beneficial for the U.S. military institution to be more aware of strategic biases resulting from entrenched norms, and figure out a way to address this so that the U.S. can effectively engage in counterinsurgency.

Moving forward, it is important to be clear-eyed about two realities. First, the American armed forces have been structured, trained, and equipped by a very specific set of strategic cultural norms for quite some time. Any change in norms or shift in strategic culture will require a significant investment in time and resources, and will be a gradual, likely generational shift. Second, the Department of Defense is facing serious fiscal constraints, and providing what is essentially Special Forces training to the entire military is impossibly expensive. Nevertheless, it is imperative to the success of current and future counterinsurgency campaigns that the U.S. military is capable of going beyond traditional military means that focus on day to day tactical gains. An institutional view that genuinely considers counterinsurgency and stability operations to be worthy of a significant investment in training and resources is essential for the future U.S. engagement in counterinsurgency. During the release of the 2008 National Defense Strategy, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced, "The danger is not that

modernization will be sacrificed to fund asymmetric capabilities, but rather that in the future we will again neglect the latter.”<sup>170</sup>

Since the U.S. withdrew troops from Iraq in 2010, there has been a hesitancy to reengage in counterinsurgency practices similar to those during 2006-2009 in Iraq. Even with the alarming proliferation of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the U.S. has opted to rely heavily on airpower and SOF efforts to train and equip the indigenous forces. This shows yet another shift in strategy- however, the origins of this shift in strategy, and whether or not the military institution has adapted to give precedence to both the bomb and build portions of stability operations in the conflict is outside the bounds of this paper. It is still too early to tell if there has been a true institutional shift of U.S. strategy in the post Operation Iraqi Freedom but given the current fight against ISIL, this is a valuable topic for future research.

## **FINAL CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study is not to argue against the value of conventional military excellence. Rather, this study seeks to highlight that in counterinsurgency and stability operations, there are many non-lethal efforts and dynamics that must be heavily accounted for when engaging in irregular war.

As we saw in the cases of Syria versus The Muslim Brotherhood, Sri Lanka versus the Tamil Tigers, Nigeria versus and Islamic militants, military lines of effort and indiscriminate force alone can only produce temporary, tactical gains. In future

---

<sup>170</sup> Ucko, D. (2009). The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars. Pg. 141

counterinsurgency operations, it will be important for policymakers and strategists to incorporate these lessons learned into future counterinsurgency strategy.

The insight gained from the second chapter brings to light the fact that in Iraq, and environments like Iraq, local dynamics can shape larger outcomes. Insight from chapter illuminates that no matter how admirable foreign assistance efforts are from an outside party leading stability operations, it is critical to calibrate these efforts to local actors. If the U.S. wishes to engagement in counterinsurgency efforts in the future, especially in Iraq, it is critical to be clear-eyed about the limits of U.S. ability to shape the Iraqi priorities and deep-rooted differences. For this reason, working by-with-and-through local partners in all parts of Iraq should be a foremost consideration.

The final assessment of U.S. strategy in Iraq and capacity to fight irregular wars reveals institutional challenges to be sure. However, by shedding light on institutional weaknesses and the negative impacts of old think and entrenched strategic norms, we are presented with an opportunity to confront weaknesses and improve U.S. capabilities to combat and defeat insurgents. Perhaps by viewing counterinsurgency as more of a “war fighting technique,” the U.S. military institution can begin to make crucial reforms.

## Works Cited

Adesoji, A. (2011). Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State. *Africa Today*, 57(4). Retrieved from: [https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/africa\\_today/v057/57.4.adesoji.html](https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/africa_today/v057/57.4.adesoji.html)

Adesoji, A. The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria. *African Spectrum*, 45(2). Retrieved from: <http://journals.sub.unihamburg.de/giga/afsp/article/viewFile/330/330>

An, C. (1984). *Social development and political violence: a cross-national causal analysis*. Seoul, South Korea: Seoul National University Press.

Baker, J., Hamilton, L. (2005). The Iraq Study Group Report. U.S. Institute of Peace. Retrieved from: [http://media.usip.org/reports/iraq\\_study\\_group\\_report.pdf](http://media.usip.org/reports/iraq_study_group_report.pdf)

Beccaria, C., Graeme, N., Pietro, M. (2009). *On Crimes and Punishments*, 5.

Benraad, M. (2011). Iraq's Tribal "Sahwa": Its Rise and Fall. Middle East Policy Council, XVIII(1). Retrieved from: <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/iraqs-tribal-sahwa-its-rise-and-fall?print>

Blanchard, L. (2014). Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf>

Carpenter, A. (2014). *Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad*. New York, NY: Springer.

Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion : why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Cook, D. (2011). The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Combating Terrorism Centre. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/CTCSentinel-Vol4Iss92.pdf>

Cordesman and Burke, "Iraq's Insurgency and Civil Violence"; *The New York Times*, Nov. 22, 2007; *U.S. News & World Report*, Feb. 6, 2008.

Davis, D. (2012). Urban resilience in situations of chronic violence. Final report of the urban resilience in chronic violence project, USAID GRANT no. AID-OAA-G-10-00002: 9. Retrieved from: [http://www.urcvproject.org/uploads/Davis\\_URCV\\_Final.pdf](http://www.urcvproject.org/uploads/Davis_URCV_Final.pdf)



Deutsch, K. (1961). Social Mobilization and Political Development. American Political Science Review. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952679>

Echevarria, A. An American War of War or Way of Battle? Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Retrieved from: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub662.pdf>

Ewi, M. (2014). Why Nigeria Needs a Criminal Tribunal and Not Amnesty for Boko Haram. Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved from: <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/why-nigeria-needs-a-criminal-tribunal-and-not-amnesty-for-boko-haram>

Fact Sheet on Iraq's Major Political Parties and Militia Groups. (2008). Institute for the Study of War. Retrieved from: <http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Fact%20Sheet%20on%20Iraq%27s%20Major%20Shia%20Political%20Parties%20and%20Militia%20Groups.pdf>

Farrell, T. (2005). The Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict. London, UK: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Galula, D., Nagl, J. (2006). Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.

Governorate Profile: Anbar Iraq. (2014). Joint Analysis Unit. Retrieved from: <http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/478/GP-Anbar%202014.pdf>

Governorate Profile: Dahuk Iraq. (2013). Joint Analysis Unit. Retrieved from: <http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/470/GP-Dahuk%202013.pdf>

Governorate Profile: Muthanna Iraq. (2013). Joint Analysis Unit. Retrieved from: <http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/474/GP-Muthanna%202013.pdf>

Gray, C. (2006). Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt? Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army. Retrieved from : [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/irreg\\_enemies.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/irreg_enemies.pdf)

Gunaratna, R. (2005). Combating terrorism. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic. Ch. 13.

Hellmann-Rajanayagam, D. (1994). The Tamil Tigers: Armed Struggle for Identity. Stuttgart, Germany: Franz. Steiner Verlag Stuttgart.

Intelligence and Analysis on Iraq: Issues for the Intelligence Community. (2004). Kerr Group, Central Intelligence Agency. Retrieved from: [http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/20051013/kerr\\_report.pdf](http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/20051013/kerr_report.pdf)

Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) Survey (2011). Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), Joint Analysis Unit (formerly Information and Analysis Unit). Retrieved from: <http://www.cosit.gov.iq/documents/statistics/living%20conditions%20statistics/survey/full%20report/Iraq%20Knowledge%20Network%20Survey%202011/Iraq%20Knowledge%20Network%20Survey%202011.pdf>

Iraq Weekly Security Report. (2015). Triple Canopy, Secure Success. Retrieved from: [http://www.triplecanopy.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Reports/Iraq\\_Report\\_04\\_21\\_2015.pdf](http://www.triplecanopy.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Reports/Iraq_Report_04_21_2015.pdf)

Iraqi Insurgency Groups. Global Security, Retrieved from: [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq\\_insurgency.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_insurgency.htm)

Kagan, K. (2008) *The Surge: A Military History*. New York, NY: Encounter Books.

Kalyvas, S., (2006). *The Logic of Violence In Civil War*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Kerry, J. (2015). Remarks to the White House: Countering Violent Extremism Summit. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved from: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/02/237591.htm>

Khan, A. (2012). On 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hama Massacre, Syrian Troops Lock Down City. PBS. Retrieved from: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/syria-undercover/on-30th-anniversary-of-hama-massacre-syrian-troops-lock-down-city/>

Kilcullen, D. (2007). *Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt*. Small Wars Journal. Retrieved from: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt>

Kilcullen, D. (2009). *The Accidental Guerrilla*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Kissinger, H. (1973). *A world restored*. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith.

Krepinevich, A. DoD, Directive 3000.05.

Lauterbach, T. (2011) *Constructivism, Strategic Culture, and the Iraq War*. U.S. Air Force. Retrieved from: [http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/apjinternational/apj-af/2011/2011-4/eng/2011\\_4\\_05\\_Lauterbach.pdf](http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/apjinternational/apj-af/2011/2011-4/eng/2011_4_05_Lauterbach.pdf)

Lindsay, J. (2011). *Varieties of Counterinsurgency: A Case Study of Iraq, 2003 – 2009*. Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California San Diego. Retrieved from:

[http://www.academia.edu/701570/Varieties\\_of\\_Counterinsurgency\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Iraq\\_2003-2009](http://www.academia.edu/701570/Varieties_of_Counterinsurgency_A_Case_Study_of_Iraq_2003-2009)

Linzer, D., Ricks, T. (2006). Marines' Outlook in Iraq: Anbar Picture Grows Clearer, and Bleaker. The Washington Post. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/27/AR2006112701287.html>

Mahnken, T. (2006) U.S. Strategic Culture. Prepared for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency Advances Systems and Concepts Office. Retrieved from: [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dtra/mahnken\\_strat\\_culture.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dtra/mahnken_strat_culture.pdf)

Meyer, E., Brysac, S. (2008). Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Moorcraft, P. (2014). Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers : The Rare Victory of Sri Lanka's Long War. Havertown, PA: Pen and Sword.

Murray, W. (2011). Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change. New York, NY: Caimbridge University Press.

National and Provincial Data for Iraq. (2010). The U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Center for Army Lessons Learned. Retrieved from: [http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/docs/11-03/app\\_b.asp](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/docs/11-03/app_b.asp)

O'Hanlon, M., Campbell, J. (2007). Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq. Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from: <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>

Olson, M. (1971). The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Petersen, R. (2001). Resistance and Rebellion: lessons from Eastern Europe. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Rear, M. (2008). Intervention, ethnic conflict and state-building in Iraq : a paradigm for the post-colonial state. New York: Routledge.

Record, J. (2006). The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency. The CATO Institute. Retrieved from: <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa577.pdf>

Ricks, T. E. (2006). Fiasco: the American military adventure in Iraq. New York, NY: Penguin Press.

Saied Rassas, M. (2014). Syria's Muslim Brotherhood: Past and Present. Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East. Retrieved from: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/01/syria-muslim-brotherhood-past-present.html>

Sergie, M., Johnson, T. (2014). Backgrounder: Boko Haram. The Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from: <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739>

Syria in Crisis. (2014). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from: <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48370>

Sri Lanka Forces Attack Reservoir. (2006). BBC News. Retrieved from: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/5249884.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5249884.stm)

Talhamy, Y. (2012). The Muslim Brotherhood Reborn: The Syrian Uprising. Middle East Quarterly, Spring. Retrieved from: <http://www.meforum.org/3198/syria-muslim-brotherhood>

Tawfeeq, M., Carter, C. (2014). Officials: ISIS recruiting on the rise in Sunni areas of Iraq. CNN. Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/09/world/meast/iraq-isis-recruit/>

Thomas-Greenfield, L. (2013). Countering the Threat Posed by Boko Haram. Congressional testimony before House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights. Retrieved from: <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2013/217653.htm>

Todd, L. (2006). Iraqi Tribal Study: Al-Anbar Governorate. Global Resources Group & Global Risk. Study Conducted Under Contract with the Department of Defense. Retrieved from: [http://turcopolier.typepad.com/the\\_athenaeum/files/iraq\\_tribal\\_study\\_070907.pdf](http://turcopolier.typepad.com/the_athenaeum/files/iraq_tribal_study_070907.pdf)

U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps, (2006). Counterinsurgency, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5.

U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps. (2010). Counterinsurgency Field Manual. Para 3-112

Ucko, D. (2009). The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars. Georgetown University Press.

Van Creveld, M. (1991). The Transformation of War. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Van Tuyl, H. (1998). America's strategic future: a blueprint for national survival in the new millennium. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press.

War in Iraq Begins. (2003). The History Channel. Retrieved from: <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/war-in-iraq-begins/print>

Weigley, R. (1977). *The American way of war : a history of United States military strategy and policy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Weinstein, J. (2007). *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Western Iraq. The Institute for the Study of War. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/western-iraq>

Who Does What Where (3W). (June 2011). Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit. Retrieved from: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full\\_Report\\_1226.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1226.pdf)

Zambernardi, L. (2010). *Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma*. The Washington Quarterly. Retrieved from: <http://csis.org/files/publication/twq10julyzambernardi.pdf>

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Natasha Schlenoff has an extensive background in Middle East issues, and has studied and worked on counterinsurgency, stability operations, and development initiatives in the region. Previously, Natasha served in the Middle East Policy office at the Office of the Secretary of Defense supporting the Iran and Iraq directorates. Prior to that, she worked on the Middle East North Africa (MENA) team at the National Democratic Institute, where she focused on building government capacity and supporting public-sector institutions to operate with transparency, representation, and accountability. Before moving to Washington D.C., Natasha lived in Amman, Jordan, where she studied Arabic at the Qasid Language Institute, and taught English to young refugees from across the MENA region.

Natasha earned her Bachelor's degree in International Affairs from Florida State University, and is a proud native of Tallahassee, Florida.